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CRITICISM

a quarterly for literature and the arts

articles by

WILLIAM BOWMAN PIPER ON TRISTRAM SHANDY'S
TRAGICOMICAL TESTIMONY

JAMES SCHROETER ON THE FOUR FATHERS:
SYMBOLISM IN "OEDIPUS REX"

DAVID M. MARTIN ON THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE
OF GOETHE'S "WILHELM MEISTER'S
APPRENTICESHIP"

LEONARD W. DEEN ON STYLE AND UNITY IN
"BLEAK HOUSE"

THOMAS R. WHITAKER ON LAWRENCE'S WESTERN
PATH: "MORNINGS IN MEXICO"

WILLIAM BYSSHE STEIN ON "BILLY BUDD": THE
NIGHTMARE OF HISTORY

*Reviews by Hyatt H. Waggoner, S. A. Golden, J. L. Salvan, Vivian C.
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Tristram Shandy's Tragicomical Testimony

A suggestion made by Ian Watt that a novel is like trial evidence and its readers like jurymen¹ is an especially happy one for the reader of *Tristram Shandy*.² A jury has, indeed, been partially built into this novel, with the presence of Sir, Madam, and the others; and their suspicious attention holds Tristram continuously in the defensive attitude of a witness. The equivocal nature of Tristram's testimony, which may be attributed to his problem of giving an acceptable mixed-company utterance to a life whose crucial facts and events are largely unmentionable, leaves the truth of his life snarled in terrible uncertainties. The reader who wishes to find out the truth must, therefore, assume the frame of mind Mr. Watt's analogy suggests. He should not share Madam's apparent distrust of the witness, for distrust may cloud his vision. But he must pay the close attention Tristram demands (57) and be willing to backtrack now and then, as Madam once has to do (56). He must be ready to unravel twisted statements, to patch out unfinished admissions and, generally, to fit pieces together.

One basic point in Tristram's equivocal testimony is, fortunately, so clearly and consistently asserted that even the sleepest or the most suspicious reader must notice it, and that is Tristram's deep devotion to the Shandy family, especially to those two Shandys nearest himself, his father and his uncle Toby. The best proof of Tristram's devotion to Walter and Toby is the great attention his testimony gives to them. He describes Walter's and Toby's attitudes and qualities in detail, giving, for instance, background and examples of Walter's eloquence and scholarship and of Toby's modesty, benevolence and military bearing. Some of Tristram's best family stories, such as Walter's

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¹ *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1957), p. 31.

² All my citations are to *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. James Aiken Work (New York, 1940).

recovery by eloquence from the disappointment of his little mare's monstrous foal (352-353) and Toby's refusal to hurt a fly (113-114), are told primarily to illustrate the brothers' special qualities. Tristram also takes great pains to equip his immediate forebears with their proper possessions, no matter how odd those might have been, with a library on noses (224 ff.), for instance, and another on military science (87 ff.), with a pair of converted jack-boots (205), a squeaky hinge (203) and an old ramallie wig (450-451). Tristram has given years of his maturity, *circa* 1759-1767, and pages of his writing, whose ostensible topics are his own life and opinions, to discovering in their appropriate leisure the actions, which took place when he himself was little—or nothing, on which Walter and Toby brought their peculiar qualities and possessions to bear. Their heir centers the report of his life on Walter's efforts to save his nose and name him philosophically on his birthday; on both brothers' reactions to his childhood sash window misfortune; and on Toby's amours, which failed even before the devoted nephew's conception.

The non-Shandys who surround Walter and Toby are almost perfectly subordinated to them and to Shandy concerns generally. It is true that Tristram's early digression on Yorick is not directly related to Shandy history, and the Shandy reference by which it is introduced (11 ff.) may be merely a joke of Sterne's, at first; but even Yorick, this partially autobiographical figure, is submitted, on the conclusion of his private woes and death (34), to the Shandys and lives on in Tristram's testimony as a touchstone for and satellite to Walter and Toby. The deep Shandy integration of the non-Shandys who follow Yorick, such as Trim, Susannah, and Mrs. Wadman, is clear; and the more various Dr. Slop too, with his disordered corpulence, truculent papistry, faulty forceps and obstetric incompetence, is tailored to fit his part in Tristram's story of the Shandys.

Tristram connects the recent Shandy past, which he has discovered so particularly, with the distant Shandy past, tying Walter, Toby and himself to their long departed ancestors. He gives, for one thing, a fairly complete notion of the Shandy inheritance. There is, of course, his account of the notoriously dwindled Shandy "nose" (217-221). But Tristram also settles on Walter and Toby the rest of their inheritance: the Shandy coach with its bend sinister arms (313-314) and Shandy Hall with its squeaky hinge (203); the Ox-moor (332 ff.) and the bowling green (98, 224); and various jointures (217-221), marriage-articles (36-41) and legacies (276, 277, 332). Tristram

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sketches in the Shandy past which these familial tokens imply with brief references to earlier Shandys. He mentions his great-great-grandfather, Sir Roger Shandy, for instance, who wore at Marston Moor the jack-boots Corporal Trim cut up into mortar pieces for uncle Toby's more recent actions (204-205). He reveals his great-aunt Dinah's scandalous romance with a coachman and tells of the argument it caused between Walter and Toby (65 ff.); and he gives a hint of his great-uncle Hammond Shandy's catastrophe in the Duke of Monmouth's affair (167). He recalls Shandy honor in the time of Henry VIII (221, 314) and outlines the Shandy decline which seems to have begun with great-grandfather Shandy, a man almost damned in a short nose and a demanding wife (217-219).

Tristram's historical testimony is not a family chronicle; but it suggests this last heir's sense of family tradition and involvement more richly and pointedly than any conventional year by year narrative would have done. The vivid and substantial figures of his father and uncle and the bright sketches of antiquity, with its almost legendary glories and shames, achieve the proportion proper to individual recollection and thus bring the whole Shandy family to bear on Tristram, the Shandys' lone representative.

Tristram, the admitted Shandy heir (336), has apparently come into possession not only of Shandy Hall (203) but of uncle Toby's more modest estate as well (224). He must also, then, have inherited his great-aunt Dinah's legacy or its value in the drained Ox-moor. And he is the dutiful if Shandaic heir that we would expect. He swears with determination that he will fix—during this reign—the squeaky hinge his father has bequeathed him (203); and he promises, in a burst of emotion, to hire a weeder to tend Toby's bowling green (224). But Tristram is not satisfied with merely preserving his inheritance and living a gentleman; he also shares Walter's wish (221) of exalting the family. He apparently plans to publish Walter's works (368, 397) and even to complete them where it is necessary (383-384). In his own writing he has given enough of Walter's notions to dignify them as the "*Shandean System*" (68). He also exalts his uncle Toby, as an example of benevolence (113-114) and as a rhetorical pioneer—for his interruptive whistling of "*Lillabullero*," which Tristram calls the *Argumentum Fistulatorium* (71). One of the reasons Tristram gives for naming this argument suggests the high family purpose and hope with which he began his testimony. He names it in order "That it may be said by my children's children, when my head is laid to

rest,—that their learned grandfather's head had been busied to as much purpose once, as other people's:—That he had invented a name,—and generously thrown it into the TREASURY of the *Ars Logica*, for one of the most unanswerable arguments in the whole science. And if the end of disputation is more to silence than convince,—they may add, if they please, to one of the best arguments too." This is almost the only place, by the way, where Tristram sees Shandy exaltation in terms of children and grandchildren.

Tristram's most characteristic and most hopeful way of paying his familial debt and exalting the Shandys is by his testimony itself. This great Shandy memorial, which Tristram addresses to the world (15, 192, 353), will be read far and wide (35-36) both now and in times to come:

... what my mother dared to say upon the occasion—and what my father did say upon it—with her replies and his rejoinders, shall be read, perused, paraphrased, commented and discanted upon—or to say it all in a word, shall be thumb'd over by Posterity in a chapter apart—I say, by Posterity—and care not, if I repeat the word again—for what has this book done more than the Legation of Moses, or the Tale of a Tub, that it may not swim down the gutter of Time along with them? (610)

And it will give his family and himself the eminence and credit, so strongly desired (10-11, 337), which they might otherwise be denied:

... if I can so manage it, as to convey but the same impressions to every other brain, which the occurrences [Toby's campaigns and amours] themselves excite in my own—I will answer for it the book shall make its way in the world, much better than its master has done before it—Oh *Tristram!* *Tristram!* can this but be once brought about—the credit, which will attend thee as an author, shall counterbalance the many evils which have befallen thee as a man—thou wilt feast upon the one—when thou hast lost all sense and remembrance of the other!— (337)

Tristram holds the pose of dutiful Shandy heir and dedicated memorialist straight through the book: his testimony starts with a crucial Shandy event, his own untoward conception in which "the fortunes of his whole house" were endangered (4), and ends with a Shandy assembly which is considering a traditional Shandy problem (643-647).

And yet there are, surprisingly, a number of hints that this pose is phony, that Tristram is not a Shandy. Tristram's jury seems generally to have dismissed them, however, and, although they must be acknowledged, the jury is surely right. Every passing hint that Tristram makes at his bastardy is opposed by his constant and natural assumption of the Shandy name and Shandy concerns. Tristram's character too, which, as Rufus Putney has said, is an amalgam of Shandy traits,³ bespeaks his legitimacy. Tristram's great Shandy involvement in the two stages of his life we see, infancy and maturity, further strengthens the impression of his true Shandeism. In name and nature and destiny, in all but blood, Tristram is unquestionably Walter Shandy's heir.

We must, however, consider the numerous hints that in blood he is not: for to most of his jury, as to Tristram himself, blood is a matter of importance. The whole business of Walter's age, debility and continence around the time of Tristram's begetting (8 ff., 296-298, 314-315, 333) makes the distant suggestion that Tristram is the offspring of someone else, a suggestion with which Walter's generally bad luck in breeding ventures (41 ff., 151-154, 352-353), his shaking his head at the mention of genitals in Ernulphus's curse (177), and the bend sinister arms on the Shandy coach (313-314) concur. Walter Shandy seems consciously to chime in with these hints when, for instance, he pointedly neglects to explain Tristram's childhood symptoms of eccentricity as Shandy signs (65); and he suggests his son's illegitimacy more pointedly in an exchange with Yorick just after the frustrated attempt to change the child's name:

And pray, *Yorick*, said my uncle *Toby*, which way is this said affair of *Tristram* at length settled by these learned men? Very satisfactorily, replied *Yorick*; no mortal, Sir, has any concern with it—for Mrs. *Shandy* the mother is nothing at all akin to him—and as the mother's is the surest side—Mr. *Shandy*, in course, is still less than nothing—in short, he is not as much akin to him, Sir, as I am—

—That may well be, said my father, shaking his head. (331)

Sterne's having carefully allowed only eight months between Tristram's official conception, the first Sunday night in March 1718 (8), and his birth, November 5, 1718 (9), hardly disperses the clouds raised

³ "Laurence Sterne, Apostle of Laughter," *The Age of Johnson*, ed. F. W. Hillis (New Haven, 1949), p. 165.

by Walter's difficulties and doubts. However, this whole complex of hints at Tristram's bastardy, which are only hints after all, is countered by the certainty of his mother's purity. Walter casts doubt on her purity by turning toward her when describing how error might creep into human nature through "the minute holes, and small crevices, which human nature leaves unguarded" (146); but a passage near the end of Tristram's testimony establishes it. Walter, who has just suggested that his wife was driven by impure motives in desiring to watch Toby court the widow Wadman, receives, first, her gentle tap on his hand which he recognizes as a just remonstrance, and, second, a view of her immaculately chaste eye. It was "a thin, blue, chill, pellucid chrystal with all its humours so at rest, the least mote or speck of desire might have been seen at the bottom of it, had it existed—it did not—and how I happen to be so lewd myself, particularly a little before the vernal and autumnal equinoxes—Heaven above knows—My mother—madam—was so at no time, either by nature, by institution, or example" (599-600). This virtually univocal assertion of his mother's purity scotches the hints that would set Tristram in the strange—may I say sinister?—situation of being the dedicated heir of a family to which he was not kin. It certifies, once and for all, Tristram's Shandeism, about which Tristram's vast jury, I believe, has always been satisfied.

Tristram, then, is the true and responsible heir of Walter and all the Shandys. That much is clear; and it explains—better than Tristram's (Sterne's) lubricity or what Thackeray might call his vice—the tenacity with which he circles the question of his potency, a point of his testimony on which Tristram is terribly unclear. On his potency, that is, on his offspring depends the continuance of the strange and wonderful family he represents. The impression that Tristram is the only Shandy left, an impression given by Bobby Shandy's early death, uncle Toby's celibacy, and Tristram's failure to mention any contemporary Shandys, emphasizes the familial importance of his potency; Tristram's impotence, if he is impotent, will apparently mean Shandy extinction.

"Over Tristram's head," as James A. Work has said, "hangs . . . the suspicion of impotence, to the heightening of which nearly all the equivocal jests concerning him contribute."⁴ But this suspicion, as Mr. Work's characterizing it as "a dubious halo" suggests, is only a suspicion. Although Tristram endlessly equivocates the term "nose,"

⁴ In the introduction to his edition of *Tristram Shandy*, pp. lx-lxi.

for instance, on whose meaning depends our understanding of his misfortune at birth, he never contradicts it. Despite such suggestions as those in the notorious tale from *Slawkenbergius*, when Tristram speaks of his "nose" he may yet mean the nose on his face, just as he unconvincingly asserts (217-218); and it may really have been his nose that Dr. Slop's forceps mashed. Tristram's account of the sash window accident is equally unclear. We can be pretty sure this time that his genitals suffered, but to what degree? What Tristram represents as Susannah's first words after the window fell, "Nothing is left," sounds decisive; but her continuation, "Nothing is left—for me, but to run my country" (376), is another matter. And the story is riddled with such cancelling suggestions. The uncertainty over Tristram's potency, which is fostered by his telling of these childhood misfortunes, is not cleared up by the scraps of information he gives us about his adulthood. One reference to Jenny (517-518), for instance, hints strongly at Tristram's impotence, and another a few pages later (549) hints strongly at the opposite. We need not analyze every hint and omission with which Tristram invests his testimony to see that the powerful suspicion of his impotence which he arouses is never resolved. The dubious halo casts only doubts on Tristram's potency, on his ability to procreate the Shandys.

The jury of readers might be inclined to let the matter rest here, undecided; indeed, many have probably refused to come so far. Even if one does give up here, the degree of public utterance he must admit Sterne to have given his witness-hero's unmentionable life story is considerable. The reader has been substantially informed on every crucial event and every essential fact of Tristram's life. He knows, if he has been attentive, that Tristram, despite hints to the contrary, is the true Shandy heir whose life is dedicated to his family. He knows also that the family's continuance depends on Tristram's doubtful potency. He knows further that, whatever may be the state of Tristram's nose, his genitals suffered a blow of some seriousness which Dr. Slop made worse. Still, the reader, not knowing Tristram's exact condition, must apparently maintain two very different notions of his testimony: first, as the last and only possible action of the last Shandy—that is, as a kind of tragicomical bravery; and, second, as merely the foolery, the bagatelle, of a perfectly normal though peculiar gentleman—that is, as the grossest kind of impertinence. The reader may shrug off this novel, then, determining that Sterne does not resolve the equivocal testimony, by which he has allowed Tristram to make some sort of public utterance, into an absolute personal record.

I would agree that Sterne never resolves the question of Tristram's potency in itself; but I believe that he has, nevertheless, been able to carry on Tristram's testimony. The question of Tristram's potency overlies a more basic one, that of his offspring; and the question of offspring, as the case of uncle Toby shows, can be answered without a univocal declaration of impotence or potency. Toby's unshakeable celibacy (101) assures us of his having died childless whether he was impotent or not. The certainty of Tristram's childlessness, however, can not be achieved so easily as Toby's has been, by story and statement. Had Tristram, the only Shandy witness, made statements sufficiently direct and sufficiently sorrowful to declare his absolute desolation, he would have upset his equivocal poise and broken his fine comical tone. Such statements, even if they were possible once Tristram was along in his equivocal testimony, would have ruined Sterne's novel. The novelist declares Tristram's childlessness, not by breaking his novel's form, but rather by observing the form strictly and by reaping its proper expressive benefits.

The form of *Tristram Shandy* is, of course, that of the self-conscious narrator.⁵ Some novelists have used a similar first-person-singular presentation of one figure to suggest a psychic transparency, a purely internal situation of timeless self-indulgence and revelation; but this is a recent innovation. Some of Sterne's contemporaries used the first-person-singular to suggest an accepted intimacy. The Pamela-parent correspondence, for instance, conjures a cozy atmosphere of shared bourgeoisie respectability; the Matt. Bramble-Dear Lewis letters radiate an agreement in good-hearted cynicism. Sterne might have done something like this: he might have turned his first-person-singular hero toward Eugenius or toward Jenny. Had he made Jenny, say, the primary recipient of Tristram's conversation, *Tristram Shandy* would have become a sort of extended *Journal to Eliza*. But in fact Tristram is not turned to Jenny nor to any dear acquaintance, as Pamela and Matthew Bramble are, but to Sir and Madam, that is, to the blank and suspicious attention of society or what Tristram would call the world. He must conclude even his most tender address to Jenny by professing not to care a groat what the world thinks of it (611).

Tristram bows to Sir and Madam, to the world, on almost every

⁵ I am more indebted to Wayne C. Booth, "The Self-conscious Narrator in Prose Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*," *PMLA*, LXVII (1952), 163-185, than the form of this paper allows me to acknowledge.

page of the novel, practicing on them every kind of social solicitation, from entreaty (often double-edged) to impudence. They often interrupt him (5, 9, 49, 56, 84-85, 115, etc.); and they always stand guard, blocking him off from immediate access to his friends without and even, as it were, from his thoughts within. What Sterne gives us in this novel, then, is not Tristram's unzipped mind nor his freely revealed intelligence, but his guarded public conversation, every sign of his mind having been filtered to pass social scrutiny. Neither Molly Bloom nor Pamela Andrews ever must equivocate her private and personal affairs as Tristram habitually does. Tristram's equivocal conversation flexes the lines of social decency, of course: that is part of Sterne's game; but the restraints against Tristram's direct revelation hold, as his admissions turn into asterisks and his directions into dodges. The formal situation of Sterne's hero is in sum rather as Hamlet's would have been had Shakespeare made the prince of Denmark reveal all his sorrows—as he could—to Polonius. Hamlet is generally considered, even as things stand, to be one of the most isolated figures in literature; Tristram Shandy is, at least formally, surely the most isolated one.

Sterne shades in the implications of Tristram's isolation not with complaints—the motley-clad entertainer must not break up his lines to weep—but by omissions, by lacks in his voluminous testimony. The certainty of Tristram's childlessness is never asserted; it merely accumulates as Tristram's lack of present kindred and his lack of flesh-and-blood future hopes persist and persist. Tristram's gradually apparent familial desolation is heightened by the continuing presence of Jenny as his only dear. Early in his talk, when he can speak of having children and grandchildren (71), he suggests that Jenny might be his daughter (49); but she seems less like a daughter with her every appearance, and toward the novel's close she is surely reduced to a mistress and almost as surely to a mistress from whom Tristram can breed no Shandy hopes. A child, a little Toby or innocent Dinah, would immediately have superseded the graying Jenny in Tristram's attentions; but there is no child.

These nine volumes of testimony leave the clear impression, then, that Tristram is the last Shandy and that the family will perish at his death. By considering death, as Sterne has worked it into these lively Shandaic volumes, we will come to accept this impression as a certainty. In the first place, Sterne uses death, as we will find, to sharpen Tristram's present isolation, to cut him off from all the

Shandy past. In the second place, Sterne uses death to assure us that Tristram's testimony is complete and thus to certify that the doom of Tristram and all the Shandys, the course of which the testimony has described, is irrevocable.

Sterne generally focuses death, whose shadow broods over the Shandy world, not on the Shandys but on their acquaintances: on Yorick, with whom the theme is first asserted (30 ff.); on Le Fever (416-426), over whose demise are dropped a number of numbered tears; and on Corporal Trim (451-452). But Sterne declares the deaths of the Shandys too. Great-aunt Dinah's death, implied by the legacy she left Walter (332), is elsewhere explicitly admitted (69, 490). Tristram announces the death of his older brother, Bobby Shandy, too (336). That event, which puts the family burden on Tristram, has, as Bruce McCullough insists, little emotional value for us,⁶ since Bobby never really appears in the novel; but the wonderful array of reactions to Bobby's death in Shandy Hall, whose inhabitants are deeply concerned, helps Sterne darken death's shadow. It is on the occasion of Bobby Shandy's death that Walter makes his eloquent speech (353-357) and Trim his more eloquent gesture—by dropping his hat “as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it” (362)—on the subject of human mortality. Tristram also reveals uncle Toby's death (452), while glancing briefly into the great gap in his testimony, *circa* 1723-1759, which he never gets around to filling in; and he once acknowledges obliquely the death of his mother (472). There are strong signs that Tristram's father, too, whose death is not explicitly admitted, died in the dark chasm of Tristram's unrecorded time. The most important sign of this is Tristram's failure to address him in all his voluminous conversation. None of Tristram's forebears is mentioned as being present or potentially present to Tristram. That Walter's perfect absence is, like that of the others, the absence of death is virtually asserted by the report of his uncertain health and advanced age even at the time of Tristram's conception in 1718 (8, 296-298, 333) and by his heir's apparent control of the Shandy estate (203, 224). Tristram's long backward view—from the 1760's to his own conception in 1718 and beyond to the battle of Namur in 1695 and beyond into the glimmering past—opens a stretch of time during which he has become, like Ossian or Melville's Ishmael, the last survivor of a sorrowful story.

As Tristram's words make increasingly clear, death finally takes

⁶ *Representative English Novelists* (New York, 1946), p. 71.

him too. W. B. C. Watkins, who is acutely aware of death's presence in *Tristram Shandy*, has ignored its artistic for its biographical value; that is, he has neglected the character Tristram Shandy to study the man Laurence Sterne.⁷ Restoring the novelist to his creative eminence, we see that it is Tristram's death primarily, and not his own, that Sterne has been preparing for.

One of Sterne's methods of preparation is the equation he has drawn between Tristram's writing and Tristram's life (162). This equation, which is bolstered by Tristram's repeated pledge to write two volumes a year for as long as he lives (37, 73-74), informs us implicitly that the stop in Tristram's writing will signalize the end of Tristram's life. The hero himself makes the inference when he admits cheerfully that "my OPINIONS will be the death of me" (286). Although Sterne may have felt this logic to fit himself in some measure,⁸ it is strictly applicable only to Tristram. Sterne did many other things besides writing down *Tristram Shandy*, even while it was in progress; and he was to live and write on—in another character—after putting it behind him. That Sterne meant Tristram to bear the full weight of the logic of the writing-life equation, no matter how he may have applied it to himself, is clear in the introduction to Tristram's flight from death:

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⁷ *Perilous Balance* (Princeton, 1939), pp. 103 ff.

⁸ See *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, ed. Lewis Perry Curtis (Oxford, 1935), p. 277, for an assertion of Sterne's, similar to those of Tristram, to write until death.

I would agree that Sterne never resolves the question of Tristram's potency in itself; but I believe that he has, nevertheless, been able to carry on Tristram's testimony. The question of Tristram's potency overlies a more basic one, that of his offspring; and the question of offspring, as the case of uncle Toby shows, can be answered without a univocal declaration of impotence or potency. Toby's unshakeable celibacy (101) assures us of his having died childless whether he was impotent or not. The certainty of Tristram's childlessness, however, can not be achieved so easily as Toby's has been, by story and statement. Had Tristram, the only Shandy witness, made statements sufficiently direct and sufficiently sorrowful to declare his absolute desolation, he would have upset his equivocal poise and broken his fine comical tone. Such statements, even if they were possible once Tristram was along in his equivocal testimony, would have ruined Sterne's novel. The novelist declares Tristram's childlessness, not by breaking his novel's form, but rather by observing the form strictly and by reaping its proper expressive benefits.

The form of *Tristram Shandy* is, of course, that of the self-conscious narrator.⁵ Some novelists have used a similar first-person-singular presentation of one figure to suggest a psychic transparency, a purely internal situation of timeless self-indulgence and revelation; but this is a recent innovation. Some of Sterne's contemporaries used the first-person-singular to suggest an accepted intimacy. The Pamela-parent correspondence, for instance, conjures a cozy atmosphere of shared bourgeoisie respectability; the Matt. Bramble-Dear Lewis letters radiate an agreement in good-hearted cynicism. Sterne might have done something like this: he might have turned his first-person-singular hero toward Eugenius or toward Jenny. Had he made Jenny, say, the primary recipient of Tristram's conversation, *Tristram Shandy* would have become a sort of extended *Journal to Eliza*. But in fact Tristram is not turned to Jenny nor to any dear acquaintance, as Pamela and Matthew Bramble are, but to Sir and Madam, that is, to the blank and suspicious attention of society or what Tristram would call the world. He must conclude even his most tender address to Jenny by professing not to care a groat what the world thinks of it (611).

Tristram bows to Sir and Madam, to the world, on almost every

⁵ I am more indebted to Wayne C. Booth, "The Self-conscious Narrator in Prose Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*," *PMLA*, LXVII (1952), 163-185, than the form of this paper allows me to acknowledge.

page of the novel, practicing on them every kind of social solicitation, from entreaty (often double-edged) to impudence. They often interrupt him (5, 9, 49, 56, 84-85, 115, etc.); and they always stand guard, blocking him off from immediate access to his friends without and even, as it were, from his thoughts within. What Sterne gives us in this novel, then, is not Tristram's unzipped mind nor his freely revealed intelligence, but his guarded public conversation, every sign of his mind having been filtered to pass social scrutiny. Neither Molly Bloom nor Pamela Andrews ever must equivocate her private and personal affairs as Tristram habitually does. Tristram's equivocal conversation flexes the lines of social decency, of course: that is part of Sterne's game; but the restraints against Tristram's direct revelation hold, as his admissions turn into asterisks and his directions into dodges. The formal situation of Sterne's hero is in sum rather as Hamlet's would have been had Shakespeare made the prince of Denmark reveal all his sorrows—as he could—to Polonius. Hamlet is generally considered, even as things stand, to be one of the most isolated figures in literature; Tristram Shandy is, at least formally, surely the most isolated one.

Sterne shades in the implications of Tristram's isolation not with complaints—the motley-clad entertainer must not break up his lines to weep—but by omissions, by lacks in his voluminous testimony. The certainty of Tristram's childlessness is never asserted; it merely accumulates as Tristram's lack of present kindred and his lack of flesh-and-blood future hopes persist and persist. Tristram's gradually apparent familial desolation is heightened by the continuing presence of Jenny as his only dear. Early in his talk, when he can speak of having children and grandchildren (71), he suggests that Jenny might be his daughter (49); but she seems less like a daughter with her every appearance, and toward the novel's close she is surely reduced to a mistress and almost as surely to a mistress from whom Tristram can breed no Shandy hopes. A child, a little Toby or innocent Dinah, would immediately have superseded the graying Jenny in Tristram's attentions; but there is no child.

These nine volumes of testimony leave the clear impression, then, that Tristram is the last Shandy and that the family will perish at his death. By considering death, as Sterne has worked it into these lively Shandaic volumes, we will come to accept this impression as a certainty. In the first place, Sterne uses death, as we will find, to sharpen Tristram's present isolation, to cut him off from all the

Shandy past. In the second place, Sterne uses death to assure us that Tristram's testimony is complete and thus to certify that the doom of Tristram and all the Shandys, the course of which the testimony has described, is irrevocable.

Sterne generally focuses death, whose shadow broods over the Shandy world, not on the Shandys but on their acquaintances: on Yorick, with whom the theme is first asserted (30 ff.); on Le Fever (416-426), over whose demise are dropped a number of numbered tears; and on Corporal Trim (451-452). But Sterne declares the deaths of the Shandys too. Great-aunt Dinah's death, implied by the legacy she left Walter (332), is elsewhere explicitly admitted (69, 490). Tristram announces the death of his older brother, Bobby Shandy, too (336). That event, which puts the family burden on Tristram, has, as Bruce McCullough insists, little emotional value for us,⁹ since Bobby never really appears in the novel; but the wonderful array of reactions to Bobby's death in Shandy Hall, whose inhabitants are deeply concerned, helps Sterne darken death's shadow. It is on the occasion of Bobby Shandy's death that Walter makes his eloquent speech (353-357) and Trim his more eloquent gesture—by dropping his hat “as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it” (362)—on the subject of human mortality. Tristram also reveals uncle Toby's death (452), while glancing briefly into the great gap in his testimony, *circa* 1723-1759, which he never gets around to filling in; and he once acknowledges obliquely the death of his mother (472). There are strong signs that Tristram's father, too, whose death is not explicitly admitted, died in the dark chasm of Tristram's unrecorded time. The most important sign of this is Tristram's failure to address him in all his voluminous conversation. None of Tristram's forebears is mentioned as being present or potentially present to Tristram. That Walter's perfect absence is, like that of the others, the absence of death is virtually asserted by the report of his uncertain health and advanced age even at the time of Tristram's conception in 1718 (8, 296-298, 333) and by his heir's apparent control of the Shandy estate (203, 224). Tristram's long backward view—from the 1760's to his own conception in 1718 and beyond to the battle of Namur in 1695 and beyond into the glimmering past—opens a stretch of time during which he has become, like Ossian or Melville's Ishmael, the last survivor of a sorrowful story.

As Tristram's words make increasingly clear, death finally takes

⁹ *Representative English Novelists* (New York, 1946), p. 71.

him too. W. B. C. Watkins, who is acutely aware of death's presence in *Tristram Shandy*, has ignored its artistic for its biographical value; that is, he has neglected the character Tristram Shandy to study the man Laurence Sterne.⁷ Restoring the novelist to his creative eminence, we see that it is Tristram's death primarily, and not his own, that Sterne has been preparing for.

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I remember, have ye once deserted me, or tinged the objects which came in my way, either with sable, or with sickly green; in dangers ye gilded my horizon with hope, and when DEATH himself knocked at my door—ye bad him come again; and in so gay a tone of careless indifference, did ye do it, that he doubted of his commission— (479)

Since Tristram's spirits never fail, the end of his writing must mean the failure of his health, the end of his life.

Sterne strengthens this logical preparation for Tristram's death by interweaving his testimony with admissions of dreadful disease. These physical signs of approaching death, unlike the logical signs, may be equally relevant to creature and creator, just as Hamlet's cosmic disillusion, say, may be both his and Shakespeare's. But, again, the ills are surely and obviously Tristram's; and they are more serious than "bilious diarrhaea" (502) or sea sickness (481). Tristram admits suffering a "vile asthma" (10, 545) and discovers his figure to be the "very thin" one of a wasted consumptive (480, 493). He also complains of a "vile cough" (479) which has cost him losses of blood (545, 627). These suggestions of disease become significantly more numerous in the later books of the novel. None of them shatters the surface of Tristram's gaiety; none of them scatters his spirits, not even this most terrible one of all:

To this hour art thou not tormented with the vile asthma thou gattest in skating against the wind in *Flanders*? and is it but two months ago, that in a fit of laughter, on seeing a cardinal make water like a quirister (with both hands) thou brakest a vessel in thy lungs, whereby, in two hours, thou lost as many quarts of blood; and hadst thou lost as much more, did not the faculty tell thee—it would have amounted to a gallon?— (545)

But their meaning, which Tristram dodges so consistently and gaily, is plain.

Sterne focuses on these different signs of Tristram's mortality by leading his hero in Volume VII, whose relevance to Tristram's total testimony its motto insists on (447), on a long flight from death. Tristram, as we would expect of him, flees death lightly and even enjoys the trip. Death, the pursuer, likewise, wears an antic face; but his presence and signs of his power, such as tombs and mummies, trouble almost every step of Tristram's way. And he still pursues

when Tristram the gaunt jester reaches the south of France and begins to slacken his pace (534).

In Volume IX death catches up with Tristram at last. The apostrophe to Jenny is one sign of death's imminent action.

. . . Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen; the days and hours of it, more precious, my dear *Jenny*! than the rubies about thy neck, are flying over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more—every thing presses on—whilst thou art twisting that lock,—see! it grows grey; and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make.—

—Heaven have mercy upon us both! (610-611)

More decisive than this in asserting Tristram's death is the winding up in this volume of all his testimonial commitments. The completeness of this winding up, of which the resolution of Toby's amours, so recently threatened with eternal interruption, is only the most obvious sign, has been demonstrated by Wayne Booth.⁹ In Volume IX, as Mr. Booth has shown, Tristram tells all he has promised to tell and promises no more. At the very end of this volume Sterne clinches the impression of conclusion: with Toby's return to the Shandy circle, now typically deployed, and with Yorick's parting quip, the equivocal epitome to Tristram's total testimony. The mere fact of Tristram's winding up in one volume: how decisive this must have seemed to Sterne's first readers who had been following Tristram's story over the years (from 1759 to 1767) in two-volume installments. Readers nowadays must pretty much do without this one sign; but Sterne gives us enough evidence to see that Volume IX concludes the novel, and to understand further what the conclusion of this novel—of this absurdly logical testimony which took up life *ab ovo*—must be.

Tristram has had time to explain the causes and suggest the course of his and his family's decline and fall. He has, moreover, had time to reveal the Shandy family in all its peculiarity, that is, to set the completed Shandy memorial before the world. Sterne's nine volumes allow his hero, as D. W. Jefferson has seen, to tell all he has to tell;¹⁰ and

⁹ "Did Sterne Complete *Tristram Shandy*?" *MP*, XLVIII (1951), 172-183.

¹⁰ "*Tristram Shandy* and the Tradition of Learned Wit," *Essays in Criticism*, I (1951), 239-240.

then death comes. Strictly speaking, death only impends, and perhaps it is most correct to think of the novel's end merely as the irrevocable close of Tristram's testimony. That his death follows immediately is a certainty of reason and not a confrontation. However, Tristram's certain death does complete his testimony: Walter, despite his doubtful potency, left an heir; Tristram, regardless of his potency, is leaving none. With his impending death the family perishes. And thus are the essential facts of Tristram's tragic life complete.

If Tristram's life is tragic, however, his testimony, as every one knows, is comical. A brief review of its presentation of Shandy life and death will show how this can be.

Sterne keeps Tristram's report of his life amusing by holding Tristram before a mixed-company audience and forming the main concern of his life—Shandy continuity and glory or, as is finally clear, Shandy extinction—not in the dreadful terms of decay and desolation but in the risqué and titillating terms of suspected sexual impotence. Although the obvious connection between procreation and sex is asserted from the first, from the telling of Tristram's untoward conception, Tristram's continuous submission to the suspicions and potential prudery of society keeps a steady emphasis on the comic near-improprieties of his talk rather than on the tragic meanings behind it. The reader frowns (or blushes) at Tristram's conversational daring and chuckles (or giggles) at his verbal dexterity and equivocal escapes; or perhaps he laughs at Sir and Madam who seem always just tumbling into an inference Tristram has primed and avoided: and thus from laugh to laugh he follows the sorrows of Tristram's unhappy life.

Sterne asserts the deaths of the Shandys and yet avoids draping their comical heir in black by his artful use of Tristram's chronological waywardness, the proper narrative counterpart of his equivocal shiftiness. The deaths of the older generation are nicely tucked into the gap of Tristram's evidence between his last significant childhood misfortune, *circa* 1723, and his first taking pen in hand, *circa* 1759. Sterne preserves this gap with Tristram's slow authorial progress, taking years of his and society's time to account for days of Walter's and Toby's time, and with what we may call Tristram's untimely death. Sterne focuses death on such as Bobby, Le Fever and Yorick. Bobby and Le Fever are among Sterne's greatest triumphs: they have just enough existence to die, Bobby being merely of wonderful slow parts and Le Fever being only, as Sterne insists, a fever. With these minimum mortalities, Sterne asserts the terror and certainty of death

without clouding the life of any figure on whom our sympathies rest, clothing terrible and irrevocable facts in sentimental cues and mock sorrows. Yorick's mock-tragic death may be a bit overdone; but it is also bubbled away, partly by Yorick's appearing later in the novel and reaching his full value for us after his death is safely behind him. At the same time, his death, coming in the largely unrecorded gap of Tristram's testimony, suggests the deaths of Toby and Walter, whose actually confronted mortality would have stripped Tristram of his motley suit and ruined Sterne's novel. But Walter's death remains unmentioned, and Tristram touches Toby's merely as a future compositional problem which, as Sterne very well knew, the jesting hero must never live to face.

Tristram's own death, as we have seen, is a matter of reason and suggestion, a novelistic certainty but not a novelistic fact. The death itself is emotionally sterile, just as Sterne wished it to be; and the novel ends with Tristram's latest joke, his last flirt at social decorum. This formally impeccable close to Tristram's singular situation, with a lonely and immediate but unreported death, allows Sterne to conclude his hero's tragic testimony without disturbing its various and pervasive laughter.

The Four Fathers: Symbolism in "Oedipus Rex"

Ernest Jones, in his book *Hamlet and Oedipus*, points out that "myth," dream, and imaginative literature share a "mechanism" known as "decomposition," the opposite of another one known as "condensation," which together have been responsible for bringing about "a great part of Greek mythology." "Condensation" involves the fusing of attributes of several people to form one composite figure. In "decomposition" attributes of one individual are disunited and several other individuals are invented, each endowed with one group of the original attributes. "In this way," says Jones, "one person of complex character is dissolved and replaced by several, each of whom possesses a different aspect of the character which in a simpler form of the myth was combined in one being; usually the different individuals closely resemble one another in other respects, for instance in age."¹

Unfortunately, Jones does not apply his generalization to Sophocles' *Oedipus*, even though the title of his book suggests that he might. Concerned with speculating about Hamlet's unconscious processes as either historical realities or the counterpart of Shakespeare's, he never engages in a detailed investigation of Sophocles' play, apparently assuming that the insights of his mentor, Sigmund Freud, were wholly adequate and that no more need be said. Had he turned his attention to such an examination, however, his theory of "decomposition" might have provided him with a clue to some of the finest and most unsuspected subtleties of a play which has often been regarded as the "greatest" in all dramatic literature.

It will be recalled that *Oedipus* has five choral passages or "odes" which divide the action into six parts. The first part or "prologue" sets forth the general situation from which the action develops: Thebes is polluted by the presence of an unknown murderer, the responsibility for whose detection and punishment is placed by the

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¹ Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York, 1955), pp. 149-50.

people in the hands of their leader, Oedipus. The last part or "exodus" presents the dénouement, the expiation of the murder. The four central parts or "agons" present the crucial action, the swift, intensely dramatic uncovering by Oedipus of the true murderer and of his own identity. Each of these four agons consists of a conflict between Oedipus and another character: the first between Oedipus and Teiresias, the second between Oedipus and Creon, the third between Oedipus and the Messenger, and the fourth between Oedipus and the Herdsman. All four adversaries—Teiresias, Creon, the Messenger, and the Herdsman—bear signs of being "decomposed" versions of a complex archetype. They are, in Jones' language, "disguises" of a single character.

The first clue to their fundamental identity is their age. Two of them, the Messenger and the Herdsman, figure as adults in actions taking place at about the time that Oedipus was born, and are therefore a generation older than he. Three—Teiresias, the Messenger, and the Herdsman—are repeatedly addressed or referred to as "old" or "old man." Creon's age is nowhere mentioned, but that he represents the older generation, the father's rather than the son's, seems clear in that he is Oedipus' uncle.² Thus, all four of the adversaries must be old men and, since Oedipus is in middle life, about the age that Oedipus' father would have been had he been alive.

Critics, scholars and producers of the play, all of whom have apparently overlooked this fact, should not be unduly censured, since the age of the adversaries is not altogether apparent from an examination of the literary document.³ On the other hand, neither can Sophocles be accused of having failed to make his intentions clear, nor need one necessarily assume that a definite idea as to the age of the adversaries formed no part of his intention. We must suppose that, like any playwright ancient or modern, he relied upon the skill of actors and director to create the visual appearance or "spectacle" upon which his meaning depended, and that, whenever his language failed to keep the contrast between the age of his adversary and protagonist to the fore, the production of the play itself might vividly, and more appropriately than the speeches, supply the lack. It is likely that, just as old men were symbolized by white and young men by purple costumes in traditional Roman drama, the ancient Greek drama used

² It should be noted perhaps that the avuncular is a substitute for the paternal role in many examples of imaginative literature.

³ One critic, Gilbert Murray, pointed out that *Oedipus* has "a large share" of old men in it, but apparently attached little importance to the fact.

some similar convention to clarify the contrasts of generations.⁴ Indeed, unless such a contrast be made (and there can be no reason to suppose the ancient acting version did not make it), an important aspect of Sophocles' meaning, which depends on sensing some analogy between the adversaries, is lost, as I believe it has been in modern productions.

The second clue to the fundamental identity of the four adversaries lies in their relationship to Oedipus. Besides being old, they function in some conserving or protecting capacity towards him that can be referred to, at least metaphorically, as "life-giving."⁵ Oedipus' fate is or has been in their hands; he has depended on their good offices somewhat as a child depends on its father's. Teiresias has a knowledge of Oedipus' true identity possessed by no one else. Had he at any time chosen to divulge this knowledge, Oedipus' happiness would inevitably have been utterly destroyed. Creon's conserving role is more direct. A politician, he has acted practically and in accordance with both family and national loyalties for Oedipus' political good, journeying to the oracles, summoning Teiresias, advising and generally sharing the political authority and rule. Without Creon's support the young and inexperienced Oedipus could not have gained the throne or, having gained it, could not have held it long. The Messenger's conserving role is still more direct. When Oedipus was a small baby, the Messenger carried him out of Thebes into Corinth, where he placed him in the hands of the king and queen, who nurtured and educated the infant and brought him safely to manhood. Had the Messenger not done so, Oedipus would have existed, at best, animal-like, as a shepherd or slave on the slopes of Cithaeron. The Herdsman's role is most direct of all.⁶ When Oedipus was three days old the queen gave the Herdsman the baby with his ankles bound and ordered him exposed on the hill to die. The Herdsman, however, taking pity on the baby, unbound him and gave him to the Messenger to take out of the country. Had he not done so, Oedipus must surely have perished. Thus, each of the four is a surrogate father, performing some

⁴ See Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre* (New York, 1957), p. 57.

⁵ See Richard Lattimore, *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy* (Baltimore, 1958), pp. 85-86. Including five characters—Teiresias, Creon, the Messenger, the Herdsman and Jocasta—rather than four, Lattimore speaks of them all as "helpers" or "rescuers."

⁶ Lattimore, *loc. cit.*, calls him the "true" or "original" helper.

part of the complex paternal function: Teiresias fostering Oedipus' psychic good (his happiness), Creon his political good (his rule), the Messenger his social good (his nurture), and the Herdsman his biological good (his physical existence). Together they share in the perfecting of the mature and kingly Oedipus we see at the beginning of the play.

So thoroughly disguised that few if any commentators have noted analogies between them, the adversaries are thus "decomposed" versions of a complex archetype and may be regarded as symbolic fathers.

The hypothesis that the adversaries are fathers gives unexpected support to the most divergent views and interpretations of the play—views I will call the "psychoanalytic," the "anthropological," and the "poetic"—and reciprocally receives support in return. The psychoanalytic interpretation, initiated by Freud and subsequently pursued by a number of his followers, including Jones, investigated *Oedipus* and other ancient plays and myths as expressions of hidden psychic processes. Writing in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud claims that *Oedipus* "is what is known as a tragedy of destiny," the chief effect of which is "said to lie in the contrast between the supreme will of the gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them." However, his point is that this "contrast," despite the general opinion to the contrary, is not really the tragic stuff of the play. *Oedipus* moves a modern audience only because of "the particular nature of the material on which that contrast is exemplified," that is, the "curse" laid upon Oedipus at birth that he will "slay his father and marry his mother." Theorizing that all men are so "cursed," since we are all fated to wish for the murder of our father and union with our mother, Freud explains that the power of Sophocles' "material" is due to its revelation of a universal psychic predisposition, in which the two acts, Oedipus' murder of his father and marriage with his mother (the "Oedipus complex"), fulfill the "primeval wishes of our childhood."⁷

These two actions, both of which occur prior to the opening of Sophocles' play, have occupied the attention of the psychoanalysts to the exclusion of those actions Sophocles actually represents—in his prologue, exodus, and agons. However, if one grants that the adversaries are fathers, the entire play rather than merely its antecedent

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York, 1955), p. 262.

action is brought crucially into the arena that the psychoanalysts have been interested in exploring. Rejecting Teiresias' dark prophecies, Oedipus attacks the old seer in the first agon. Accusing Creon of treachery, he attempts to destroy the old politician in the second. Concerned over his own clouding private fate, Oedipus unconsciously upsets the Messenger's entire purpose in making his journey in the third. Frightened and at the limits of his patience, he tortures the old Herdsman in the fourth. Thus, Oedipus commits some violent or destructive act against each of his fathers, exhibiting a pattern similar to that in the antecedent action at the crossroads, when he had unwittingly murdered his real father, Laius. Ignorant or unconscious of his "debt" to each father, partly because of the danger they pose (just as, for the same reason, he had been ignorant of his "debt" to Laius), Oedipus in his actions repeatedly reveals that same paradoxical "contrast" which Freud prefers to translate from cosmic or religious into biological or psychological terms. Thus translated, each agon becomes a disguised murder of the father by the son in which both the nature of the father and of the murder are transformed or "repressed."

Freud thought that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which he claims "has its roots in the same soil as *Oedipus*," demonstrates a "changed treatment of the same material" as that in *Oedipus*, and thereby reveals "the whole difference in the mental life of those two widely separated epochs of civilization," the Greek and the Elizabethan: that is, "the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind." In short, he believed that whereas the "child's wishful fantasy" of Oedipus is "brought into the open and realized," Hamlet's "remains repressed" and is only symbolically rather than literally represented.⁸ Although an interpretation of the adversaries as symbolic fathers takes away the primal simplicity with which Freud wanted to endow *Oedipus*, and makes it seem closer to *Hamlet*, more "civilized" and "repressed," than he had suspected, it also, in addition to corroborating the psychoanalytic theory of "decomposition," provides a striking confirmation of Freud's theory as to the actual nature of the material with which Sophocles was dealing and the reason for its universality of appeal. Reciprocally the Freudian theory gives weight to the theory that the adversaries are fathers and helps supply a level of meaning to the play that, without the theory, might be largely unsuspected.

⁸ Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

The anthropological school, including Gilbert Murray and those following James Frazer's lead, have interested themselves in *Oedipus* and other ancient plays as myths, as outgrowths of primitive religious rituals. Whereas the psychoanalytic critics have investigated these documents as clues to hidden psychic processes, the anthropological critics have sought to find hidden rites and ceremonials in them—the "aition" (explanation of a rite) or the "sparagamos" (ritual dismemberment) of tragedy, or the "gamos" (sexual union) of comedy, elements of which they have uncovered in a number of plays and myths. One of the most crucial of such rites, according to the anthropological school, was a prehistoric ceremony involving a struggle or "agon" between two characters, one of them young and the other old, in which the young character or "protagonist" represented the son or king-to-be and the old character or "antagonist" represented the father or "pharmakos" (old king). The ceremony was concluded by a representation of the slaying of the old by the new king, thereby symbolizing the cycles of social and political change, of the generations (old age giving way to youth), of the seasons (winter giving way to spring), and, more generally, of the eternal mystery of life renewed. As the anthropological commentators have demonstrated, this ceremonial, with all of its profound religious and civic significance, has persisted vestigially in a great many ancient Greek plays, but most notably in those dealing with the stories of Orestes and Oedipus.

Although the only part of Sophocles' play which the anthropological critics have suspected to bear a relationship to the prehistoric rite is that antecedent action which also intrigued Freud and Jones, Oedipus' killing of Laius at the crossroads, each agon will be seen to bear a relationship once the symbolic nature of the four adversaries is recognized. Each involves a struggle between two characters, an old antagonist and a young protagonist; each concludes with a "destruction" of the old antagonist at the hands of the young.

Obviously there are great differences between Sophocles' agons and the primitive ceremonials described by the anthropologists, and these differences should not be minimized. Clearly the agons represented by Sophocles are immensely more refined than the struggles represented in the primitive rites. Perhaps the difference is not essentially greater, however, than that between the raising of Lazarus as described in the Gospels and, say, Dostoevsky's symbolic representation of it in *Crime and Punishment*, in which the hero, Raskolnikov, is morally regenerated under circumstances that Dostoevsky wants his reader

to associate with the sacred ones described in the Gospels. In the Gospels, the regeneration is physical, in Dostoevsky moral; in the Gospels it is effected directly by Christ, in Dostoevsky through the intermediation of Sonia, a prostitute; in the Gospels the account is given simply in a few paragraphs, in Dostoevsky at the length of several hundred pages involving countless subtleties and ramifications. Despite the enormous transformation, no one contests that the parallel exists and is of great importance in understanding *Crime and Punishment*. There should be little difficulty, then, in assuming that Sophocles may have drawn upon rituals, perhaps no less sacred to his culture than those of Dostoevsky were to his, however more difficult for a modern audience to recognize, and of equal importance in understanding the meaning of *Oedipus*.

A symbolic interpretation of the adversaries thus helps confirm the anthropological conviction that the primitive rituals were a pervasive influence on Greek drama by supplying previously unsuspected examples of them, while, reciprocally, the anthropological researches give added support to the theory that the adversaries are symbolic, and help provide a deeper level of meaning to the play.

The poetic critics, including such relatively recent scholars as H. D. F. Kitto and others, either ignoring or reacting against the excessive tendencies of the earlier genetic schools, have interested themselves in *Oedipus* and other Greek plays as conscious, artistic constructs rather than as expressions of hidden psychic impulses or collections of vestigial rituals.⁹ Assuming that the plays are best viewed as more or less carefully thought-out poetic structures, they have attempted, using a method not unlike that of Aristotle in the *Poetics*, to account for the parts—the actions, characters, and speeches—by showing how they contribute to the unity of the whole rather than by showing where they come from, whether that origin is viewed as a “mechanism” of the imagination or as a certain religious or dramatic tradition. Translated into Aristotelian terms, *Oedipus* can be described as a “complex” tragedy in which each episode contributes in either a “likely” or “necessary” way to the “recognition” which occurs at the end of the last episode. Providing one or more clues to Oedipus’ identity, each episode is “likely” in the sense that it follows plausibly from what came before, and also is “necessary” in that it prepares for what is to come afterwards by making inevitable the recognition scene on which the tragic catharsis mainly depends.

⁹ H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy* (New York, 1954), p. v.

Oedipus' "hamartia," when that term is used in the etymological sense of a "mistake" or "missing of the mark" rather than in the customary nineteenth-century understanding of it as a "flaw in character," seems most obviously and clearly applied to those two acts which occur outside the play, Oedipus' murder of his father and marriage to his mother. Like Clytemnestra's murder of her husband in *Agamemnon*, Orestes' murder of his mother in *The Libation Bearers*, or those various killings Aristotle discusses in his chapter on the "hamartia" in the *Poetics*, these acts constitute Oedipus' violation of the "laws that live on high," and, besides being the cause of the chain of events presented in the play, are the subject of his discovery. Consequently, their importance from a dramatic point of view is difficult to overestimate. Despite this importance, Sophocles had to make the "hamartia" external to the drama in order to avoid serious artistic weaknesses. Had he included the incest and parricide, first he would have been involved in what Aristotle calls an "epic" synthesis, with the problem of representing not only a long span of time (many years) and geographically separate places (Phocis and Thebes), but a double rather than a single action. Second, in representing events so sensational and shocking, he would have produced what Aristotle calls the "monstrous" rather than the "humane" or "tragic," one consequence of which would be that the dignity and nobility of Oedipus' character would suffer or be greatly weakened. Third, as Aristotle specifically points out, he would have emphasized rather than minimized the single implausibility in the play, the fact that Oedipus, after the passage of many years, is so uninformed about Laius' death that it comes as a dreadful surprise to him when Jocasta tells him the time, place and manner of it.¹⁰ Thus, in externalizing the "hamartia" Sophocles also externalizes the horrible and the implausible on the one hand, and clears the way, on the other, for a highly unified concentration on the single action that interests him, Oedipus' recognition.

The dramatic problem is that, having taken out the "hamartia," Sophocles must then put it back again. One way he does this is through Oedipus' narration of the murder. But, if his play is to be unified rather than episodic, the "hamartia" must be something "organic," internal to the very nature of the hero and his action rather than merely an isolated accident lying outside the plot. Introducing the adversaries as fathers, Sophocles solves the problem by symbolizing the "hamartia." He makes it integral to the action by repeating it, in a modified form,

¹⁰ *Poetics*, Chap. 24, 1460a, 30.

in each agon, reconstructing the original set of factors both in terms of Oedipus' character and the circumstances under which it acts. Thus the four fathers, although certainly "accountable" from the psychoanalytic and anthropological views, can also be *poetically* explained as a necessary means by which Sophocles achieves artistic unity.

One possible objection to the theory that Teiresias, Creon, the Messenger, and the Herdsman are fathers is that it is incomplete, ignoring as it does the bulk of the poetic detail with which Sophocles has portrayed the four. Although the theory satisfactorily accounts for the two similarities between them, their age and "life-giving" functions, it does nothing to explain their many differences. Yet these differences far outweigh the similarities, so much so that the similarities have scarcely been noticed, perhaps "disguised" by the more strongly-drawn and obvious differences. Indeed, the more closely one examines the play the more pervasive, striking, and important these differences appear, whether one compares the adversaries from the social, the moral, or the intellectual points of view.

Socially, Teiresias and Creon represent the upper order, the Messenger and the Herdsman the lower. Teiresias, as an embodiment of divine and supernatural power, is highest in order of importance as well as first in order of appearance. He is regarded by the city, as expressed in the choral passages, with great reverence and awe. Although of royal blood, Creon stands at a lower level. As a representative of the ruling family he is respected and loved but neither feared nor venerated. The Messenger is of distinctly lower status than Creon but of higher status than the Herdsman. Unfortunately, one can only guess at how he was to be costumed or the accents with which he was to speak, but his appearance must be such as to explain Oedipus' astonishment when he learns that the man was once employed at so lowly an occupation as sheep-herding.¹¹ His city has entrusted him with an important mission, and his assured manner indicates a man who, if of lowly origin, has come up an important step in the social hierarchy. The Herdsman, by contrast, a slave and a shepherd, stands on the very lowest rung of the social ladder.

Morally the contrasts are equally pronounced. Teiresias, who is both fearless and proud (in the sense of knowing his proper worth),

¹¹ *Oedipus*, 1. 1029.

represents justice or "dike," justice in that humanistic and self-assertive sense characteristic of Greek morality rather than the forgiving and self-effacing sense characteristic of Christian morality. When attacked by the king, he does not hesitate to return, retributively, Oedipus' scorn and insult with greater scorn and insult of his own. Creon displays moderation and prudence, lower virtues than those of Teiresias but higher than those of the Messenger. Whereas Teiresias counterattacks, Creon when attacked merely defends himself. His morality is dictated by considerations of honor rather than of justice. The Messenger's morality is dictated by expediency. We can safely assume that his reasons for bringing Oedipus out of Thebes many years before were self-interested; he knew his king and queen were childless, and he has evidently benefited from supplying their lack. Clearly hoping, in the third agon, to gain some benefit to himself for his "good news," he is alternately sycophantic and impudent depending on the direction in which he sees his own advantage. The Herdsman stands at the opposite extreme from Teiresias. Fearful rather than fearless, abject rather than proud, and uncomplicated by considerations of justice, honor, or expediency, he shows the proper "virtues" of a slave rather than a freeman.

Sophocles, as is appropriate in a play of "recognition" turning on the opposition between ignorance and knowledge, makes his most important contrasts depend on the intellectual differences between the fathers. Teiresias is divinely inspired. He has a profound insight into the past, present, and future, into "things teachable and things which cannot be spoken," into matters earthly and matters heavenly. He speaks in an apocalyptic poetry—lofty, enigmatic, powerful. Creon is wise but speaks from facts which can be immediately perceived. He has a knowledge of things of the earth but not of things of heaven. His reason takes the form of demonstration rather than intuition, and his language the form of logic rather than truth, of rhetoric rather than poetry. The Messenger's intellect is calculative rather than demonstrative or intuitive. He represents human cunning as opposed to Creon's political or Teiresias' divine wisdom. The Herdsman, who accidentally lets slip the information he is trying to conceal, shows least intellectual ability of all. Dull and simple, he is ungraced with sufficient cunning to protect himself.

Writing in the *Politics*, Aristotle says that the man "who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself

must be either a beast or a god."¹² These two poles, Beast and God, may be said to define the extremes between which mankind ranges. Many cultures, both simple and highly civilized, have tended to view man in such a framework—as mediant between God and Beast, Angel and Animal—but the scheme is strikingly reflected in Greek art and thought of the fourth and fifth centuries and provides a clue to the contrasts Sophocles has drawn between his fathers. Two of them live within ordinary society; the other two live outside of it. Creon and the Messenger, the intermediates appearing in the second and third agons, live within it but function there on two sharply divergent levels, the upper and lower, as ruler and ruled, showing the social virtues appropriate to their stations. Teiresias and the Herdsman, the two extremes figuring in the first and last agons, live outside of human society and must be summoned from their respective isolations before they appear. Although equally isolated, they live apart from the rest of mankind for opposite reasons. Teiresias is *above* human society, a man who inspires fear and whose associations are with the gods rather than his fellow men. The Herdsman is *below* human society. Living outside the "polis" tending sheep, he has retreated from human society because of fear, and his associations are with animals rather than gods or men.

The contrasts that Sophocles develops, rather than being random "disguises," give every appearance of having been carefully thought out and systematically differentiated socially, morally, and intellectually. Graduated from high to low, God to Beast, they reflect a total, cosmic view of man's condition. In addition to symbolizing fathers, the adversaries, therefore, may be said to represent the four stages of man. A background against which Oedipus' actions can be projected, they provide these actions with the widest possible significance.

Like the chief figures of other national literatures, myths, and religions (e.g., King Arthur, Moses, Mohammed, Christ), Oedipus is brought up by foster parents. Although the son of a king, Arthur is raised by humble parents. Moses, a Hebrew, is raised by Egyptians; son of a subject people, he is brought up by royal parents. A posthumous child, Mohammed is raised first by a wealthy grandfather and then by a poor uncle, while Christ, the Son of God, is raised as the son of a humble carpenter. Each becomes a political or religious leader—Arthur of the Britons, Moses of the Jews, Mohammed of the Moslems, Christ of the Christians—and each, by having a double set

¹² *Politics*, Bk. I, Chap. 2, 1253a, 28.

of origins, assumes a special, universal significance. As an "ordinary" man (the "child" of a lowly knight, subject people, poor uncle or humble carpenter), he shares the common folk origin of the people he will lead. As the son of a divinity or king, he enjoys an origin superior to that people. Partly mortal and partly divine, partly commoner and partly king, he both shares and transcends the ordinary lot. Similarly Oedipus has two sets of parents, which, like those of Moses, represent two nationalities. Like the others his background ties him intimately both to royalty on the one hand, and to the "common folk" on the other. But Sophocles introduces an additional refinement into the picture by making the "fathers" symbolic of all stages of mankind. Rather than having been formed by any one or two of these "stages," Oedipus is a product of them all and is of far wider significance than any one of them. Embracing paradoxically the divine and the animal, his status is first that of a king and then that of a slave; his actions are god-like in his pursuit of truth and justice, and bestial in that he kills his father and cohabits with his mother; his knowledge is both prophetic and divine when he solves the riddle of the Sphinx and less than human in that, animal-like, he is ignorant of his own parentage and identity. Thus Oedipus singly exhibits the same wide human spectrum as do his fathers jointly, and his tragedy is "universal"—for and of all men, of whatever condition or degree.

In a penetrating observation on *Oedipus*, Freud said that the action can be likened to the "work of a psychoanalysis" in that it "consists in nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement," that Oedipus is "himself the murderer of Laius."¹³ Had Freud continued, he might have pointed out that the play presents Oedipus' mental voyage back to his buried, traumatic past—ultimately back to the point at which the three-day-old infant was "cast out" by his parents, so that the "process" he refers to represents the recovery of increasingly earlier and therefore more deeply buried memories, exactly as in a psychoanalysis. Rather than being dredged from Oedipus, as in a psychoanalysis, the memories are supplied by the adversaries. Therefore, if one is to fully accept Freud's analogy, he must regard the fathers as projections of Oedipus' own mental levels, ranging from the "conscious" on the one hand, to the "unconscious" on the other.

Oedipus' "psychoanalytic" journey has a clear "anthropological" analogue. Whereas in psychoanalytic terms the play represents

¹³ Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-262.

Oedipus' descent into his dim mental past, in anthropological terms it represents his journey downwards towards the dark beginnings of the race. Thus the fathers can be viewed as "levels" ranging between the two anthropological poles, "civilized" and "primitive," as well as levels between the psychoanalytic poles, "conscious" and "unconscious."

Although equally plausible and suggestive, both interpretations represent a peculiarly modern "twist" in, or reduction of, Sophocles' scheme. Oedipus' "descent" is most properly defined by the religious "God-Beast" rather than the psychological "conscious-unconscious" or cultural "civilized-primitive" polarity. It will be recalled that in the first agon Oedipus chooses to battle with Teiresias on the grounds of wisdom rather than political power. The issue at stake is "truth," and Oedipus, twice reminding the blind prophet of his own superhuman wisdom in answering the Sphinx, makes of the battle a struggle between two prophets rather than prophet and king. Accusing Creon of treachery and political chicanery, Oedipus makes the struggle between them turn on the question of who has the greater honor in the eyes of the people. Rather than involving two prophets, the battle between them involves two rival politicians. Sophocles portrays a private "drama of cross purposes" in his third agon. Neither Oedipus nor the Messenger, each strong in his own hopes and fears, is able to see fully the motives of the other, with the result that each unconsciously defeats the other. The Messenger is concerned with his self-advantage in the form of a reward for his good news and favor in his king's eyes, and to that extent acts in a private rather than a public capacity; but Oedipus, no longer acting as prophet or politician, is also concerned with his "private" fate rather than that of his "polis." Cringing and afraid, the Herdsman in the fourth agon is concerned mainly with his physical safety, but it is his physical person that Oedipus attacks. Trying to get the old man to speak because of the urgency of his own fears, Oedipus descends (for the first time) to physical coercion, while at the same time he is himself close to the immediate prospect of physical harm. Paradoxically diminished by each "victory," Oedipus descends in each agon to the successively lower stages symbolized by the fathers.

The poetic significance of this descent cannot be understood fully without comparing it with an opposite movement in the last episode or "exodus," in which the blinded, suffering king says farewell to his children and banishes himself from the city over which he had

ruled. Commentators point out that Sophocles, by displaying his hero at the extreme limits of suffering and pain, here completes the "reversal" (from happiness to misery), but they seldom point out that he also completes the "catharsis" of his play (purging of pity and fear) by "raising" as well as "lowering" his hero. It is true that Sophocles does not dramatize in this play that part of Oedipus' life following his exile in which he becomes a divinely inspired prophet living apart from the rest of mankind and possessed of oracular wisdom; he deals with that part of the legend in *Oedipus at Colonus*. But Sophocles presents a sufficiently complete set of clues before the conclusion of *Oedipus Rex* to indicate clearly a parallel between Teiresias, symbol of the highest "stage of humanity," and the "resurrected" Oedipus. First and most obviously, Oedipus, like Teiresias, is blind (an infirmity conventionally associated with seers and prophets), having put out his own eyes in a deeply symbolic gesture. Second, like Teiresias, Oedipus is to live outside of the "polis" (living apart from normal society is also conventionally associated with prophets), having exiled himself according to his own edict in a second profoundly symbolic gesture.¹⁴ Third and most important, like Teiresias he possesses the oracular knowledge of a prophet, having painfully gained it through his own unrelenting search into matters which another kind of man would perhaps have preferred to leave unexplored. Thus he has arrived at a higher stage of humanity through a series of apparent descents into more degraded stages of humanity. The catharsis or emotional reflexivity of the play depends on the fact that Oedipus has come full circle. Just as Teiresias is not to be feared for or pitied, even though blind and solitary, because he is in a sense above pity and fear, so Oedipus, morally sublime in his self-caused blindness and self-willed exile, is too great a figure for pity or fear—a man magnificently equal to his fate, however terrible and unforeseen that fate may be.

¹⁴ Oedipus' self-inflicted punishment (exile and blinding) is double, as was his *hamartia* (parricide and incest). The first punishment, exile, is a fulfillment of a public pact Oedipus made with his subjects, in accordance with his own edict, while the more terrible blinding is a private act akin almost to madness, perhaps fulfilling some unwritten prescript of the gods. Whereas the first punishment can be considered a voluntary deprivation of the highest good—citizenship—conferred by the political community which a man has the power to take from himself, the second can be considered a deprivation of the highest good conferred by the gods which a man has the power to take from himself. The first seems a fitting expiation for the parricide, while the second seems to fit the more private and yet more hideous crime of incest.

The point is that the stages of Oedipus' "resurrection" as well as of his descent are clarified and defined by analogy with the fathers, taking on color and meaning from it. Hence, the entire tragedy depends on the conception of man's potentialities that is implied by the fathers' four "human stages."

The adversaries, therefore, in addition to serving as unwilling vehicles of the knowledge, both creating and destroying, which provide Oedipus with the basis for his ultimate regeneration, act as seldom-suspected but important symbols. On the one hand they stand for the father Oedipus has killed and whom he symbolically kills again. On the other hand they jointly symbolize the four stages of humankind (ranging comprehensively between the two poles, God and Beast), thereby defining both the "universality" of Oedipus as a man and the full meaning of his descent and resurrection.

Thematic Structure of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship"

Ever since Percy Lubbock wrote his *Craft of Fiction*, modern critics of the novel have been obsessed with problems of form and structure. Mark Schorer, for one, elaborates on Lubbock's theories to say that fiction as a literary art "must begin . . . with figurative structures," that a novel is "an image of life; and the critical problem is first of all to analyze the structure of the image."¹

I would like to investigate the value of such a theory by applying it to an old classic, one that is generally considered to be "poor" as far as structure goes, in order to see whether or not something is gained by our modern theories—a fresh and rewarding insight into the old classic, perhaps, or a new awareness of the author's art.

I find no other novel by a great author so crammed with contemporary literary conventions as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is with those of the eighteenth century. As Franz Schoenberger recently commented, "There was still enough left of the character of the picaresque novel of the eighteenth century to fill the story with the most improbable coincidences and fantastic adventures; with tales of attempted murder and arson, of insanity, incest, and suicide; with complicated romances and mistaken identities; with lost, stolen, or substituted children; with mystical messages, prophetic dreams, and, of course, a Secret Society."² The summary well suggests the episodic nature of Goethe's novel and implies also the attributed weakness in its structure: a wealth of structural parts unjustified by the matter.

Approaching the problem of structure through Mark Schorer's theory, however, I find that Goethe has built his novel on a single

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¹ Mark Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix,'" *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction: 1920-1951*, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York, 1952), p. 83.

² Franz Schoenberger, introd. to *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, trans. Thomas Carlyle (New York, 1959), p. xii.

image which integrates theme with structure. The image which accomplishes this is found in the parallel drawn at the end of the novel between Wilhelm Meister and the biblical Saul, who "went out to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom." The image suggests a two-fold division of the novel, the first part analogous to seeking the asses, and the second analogous to finding a kingdom. A causal relationship between the two parts is also implied, for the kingdom would never have been found had not the search for the asses first been undertaken. On this structural pattern is based not only the general framework of the novel but also the small interwoven details which fill in the framework and give the novel its textual depth.

Looking first at the framework of the whole, I find that such a structural pattern is indeed strongly presented. Just as Saul vainly searched for the beasts which, he later discovered, had already been found, so also Wilhelm Meister for a long time devotes himself with youthful enthusiasm to the ideal of developing the German National Theater, even though he does not have any great talent for the stage. However, as in Saul's case, Wilhelm's pursuit of the lesser goal is valuable in as much as it leads him to establish contacts with individuals who help lift him into a higher form of life. This higher life is the kingdom found by Saul and by Wilhelm. However gratuitous, it is not a utopian daydream; rather it implies the idea of fulfillment through the mature responsibility demanded of a ruler. Thus is Wilhelm initiated into manhood and his true personality developed. The movement of the novel, then, is from youth to maturity, from enthusiastic but misguided searching to an acceptance of active responsibility—an educative process for Wilhelm, based on the realization not only of the strength of his true nature but of its limitations as well; a process based on the knowledge that he had first to seek the lesser before he could find the greater.

The same formula suggests like structural patterns within the framework of the whole. Everything which Wilhelm comes in contact with, however seemingly insignificant, gradually acquires meaning when reflected in terms of the dominant image. Thus he and all things in relation to him undergo a change from doubt to certainty, from complexity to simplicity, from the needless to the essential, from littleness to significance—in a word, from asses to a kingdom.

Such a pattern can readily be seen if the crisis of the novel is used as a focal point of investigation. The crisis occurs at that stage in Wilhelm's apprenticeship when he turns from his search for the lesser

and proceeds, unknowingly at first, toward the greater. The crisis is objectified in his production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Previously Wilhelm had been wandering about the countryside rather aimlessly with his ill-assorted troupe, acting and improvising whenever the opportunity arose. Induced to read the plays of Shakespeare by a soldier named Jarno (who belongs to the ideal society of the kingdom yet to come), Wilhelm was strangely affected by them, especially by *Hamlet*. In it he saw a plan that was not invented but real. Now, if the pattern of *Hamlet* is "real," it must be separated from the idea of an artificial stage and associated instead with actual life. This relationship is immediately seen in the fact that Hamlet's doubts and perplexities are Wilhelm's own, and that Wilhelm's sole theatrical success is in his personal portrayal of these very perplexities. He cannot repeat the success because that particular emotional state of mind which made the play real for him has passed. Drama, then, is real only in so far as it leads to the higher realization of actual life. Unable to find any such reality, or personal fulfillment, in the stage because of his lack of natural talent for it, Wilhelm abandons the life of the theater. Having given up his search for the lesser (through the question of reality inspired by *Hamlet*, itself a play), Wilhelm proceeds toward the greater, toward the development of his true personality as it is to be realized in the active life of the new world lying ahead of him.

The crisis of the novel looks both ways. Looking ahead it points to the kingdom that is to come. The kingdom is the ideal world contrasted to the world of the stage and peopled with beings fulfilling their own personalities instead of with actors impersonating what is not themselves. Already heightened to such an awareness through the "Confessions of a Fair Saint," Wilhelm finds here his true fulfillment in a life of practical activity involving the governing of his landed estate. It is a way of life which he does not deliberately choose right from the start but rather one into which he falls by accident. When he goes to the estate of Lothario to reprimand him for his callous treatment of an actress friend, he discovers that the girl rather than Lothario was at fault. Coming as it does at Wilhelm's period of transition, the incident serves to illustrate his oft mistaken values. His mistake, however, proves useful in that it leads him bodily into the ideal world. His friend Jarno is there, along with Wilhelm's brother Werner, who has vainly been proposing to Wilhelm the ideal of the civic life which he has founded with their joint inheritance. Now that

Wilhelm sees the new life in its actual function, he is persuaded to adopt it.

The crisis of Wilhelm's vocational career is paralleled by his crisis in love, which in all its complexity further illustrates the asses-to-kingdom theme. The novel opens with Wilhelm's youthfully passionate love for Mariana and closes with his more mature love for Natalia. His love for Mariana, who is an actress, represents an immature love of the stage, whereas his love for Natalia, who is the embodiment of fulfilled activity, represents love of the ideal world and of perfection. Wilhelm leaves Mariana because he believes her to be unfaithful; only much later does he become aware of his mistake. But again his error in judgment proves beneficial, for it has launched him on his theatrical travels which are necessary for his eventual fulfillment. During his travels he encounters the bewitching Philina, who seems to represent the allurements of the world, the temptation of the wrong way of life. But he is warned against her by Mignon, the child of mystery, whom he has earlier adopted. Mignon gradually takes on major significance in her opportune warnings against Wilhelm's misplaced loves and also against his theatrical intentions. After Wilhelm has given up the theater and has entered into the society of the ideal, he plans, with cold rationality, to marry Theresa who is a member of the ideal world. His purpose is to supply a mother for Felix, another waif he has adopted earlier but whom he just now discovers to be his own son by Mariana. Mignon is so upset by this impending marriage that she dies of a violent heart attack. Her mission, however, is successful, for this last warning again proves valid. Theresa and Wilhelm soon drift apart, she to marry Lothario and he to marry Natalia. Theresa seems to illustrate the temptation of the right way of life: marriage in an ideal situation but without emotional love. She serves, nevertheless, as an immediate preparation for Wilhelm's true ideal of rationality and emotion in Natalia. Natalia, in turn, represents the full achievement of his kingdom and the final completion of his personality.

Each of these interrelated threads repeats singly the image of the whole not only in the general progression of effect but also in the causal relationship of the search for the lesser as a necessary preliminary to greater fulfillment. Wilhelm's love for Mariana, though immature and misplaced, is not worthless because its issue, Felix, forces Wilhelm to seek a mother for the son and leads him to the ideal marriage with Natalia. Felix is an actuality that must be acknowledged and coped with. In the paternal and civic responsibilities awakened

by the boy, Wilhelm begins to realize his true self. Therefore, Mariana and the stage she symbolizes are a necessary preliminary to Natalia and the ideal world. The good influence of the theater on Wilhelm is most concretely visible in a comparison with his brother Werner. Werner, who also has achieved his self-fulfillment in a life of civic activity, but without benefit of the theater, is shown to be in a condition of retrogression. The inference is that Werner represents what Wilhelm would have become had he not first floundered about in the theater.

The novel, then, as elucidated by one of our modern theories, is fashioned from a single image which is both theme and structure. This image divides the novel into two parts causally connected, which are built upon a network of characters and incidents illustrating in particular the theme of the whole. It is in his preoccupation with these that Wilhelm (and perhaps the reader along with him) completes the image by finding himself and becoming at the end worthy of the name of Meister.

Style and Unity in "Bleak House"

With the multiplied characters of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853) the expansibility of the Victorian novel comes close to its limit. The novel is roughly halfway over before Dickens has introduced the last of his proliferating cast of characters. Some of the minor characters exist at a great distance from the parent trunk; the branches have branches, and these in turn have *their* branches. Dickens is hard put to it to involve all his *dramatis personae* in some kind of plot; and the elaborate climaxes are often attended by people who *are* got on stage, even if they are only meddling. In its apparent attempt to sum up a whole society—peerage, lawyers, industrialists, shopkeepers, preachers, philanthropists, brickmakers, and crossing sweepers—*Bleak House* runs the risk of becoming a disorganized aggregation rather than a unified work of art.

The disorder of this vast system seems to be increased by its division into spheres of experience which are, or at first sight appear to be, almost completely unrelated. The two major worlds are the one experienced by Esther Summerson, and the panoramic one unfolded by the "anonymous" author. The major peculiarity of *Bleak House* is that the story is narrated by two distinct voices, only one of which belongs to a character in the novel. The anonymous speaker is not, properly speaking, "omniscient"; he doesn't *know* everything, and he does not have the key to anyone's consciousness, but he does *see* everything, and his eye is extraordinarily far-ranging. To take the two points of view at their most extreme difference, Esther's story is a melodramatic personal narrative, the author's an "external" descriptive narrative in which the greatest distinction of tone is to be found in the ironic descriptive pieces which manage the shift from one setting to another. The split into two very different points of view, each with its dominant tone, very much complicates the already complex plot and full universe of *Bleak House*. In spite of these difficulties, the novel does not disintegrate. To demonstrate the kind of unity it does possess is perhaps the best way of getting at its peculiar values.

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Esther's story is primarily about parents and children and their impoverished relationships. Her narrative begins with her "escape" from a cruel aunt-stepmother and her absorption into the fairy-tale simplicity and security of Bleak House, where John Jarndyce has established a cozy inviolable retreat, and surrounded himself by children. The burden of Esther's story, whether it concerns Bleak House or London, is the perversion or crippling of the family and the child. Caddy Jellyby is ignored by her mother, who is more interested in philanthropy; the Pardiggle children are made monsters by a "philanthropic" mother's extortion of charity from them; Turveydrop is a parasite on his son. Harold Skimpole is an adult whose peculiar hypocrisy is to pretend that he is an entirely free, charming, and irresponsible child; and as child, of course, he can only ignore his duties as husband and father. Richard Carstone, when he dies, leaves his wife with a yet unborn child. "Charley" Neckett is orphaned, with a family of brothers and sisters to care for; Jo has neither parents nor relatives. Confronted by this astonishing array of the abandoned and the misbegotten, Esther spends her life trying to establish surrogate families. To people of her own age—Richard, Ada Clare, Charley, and Caddy—she plays mother. With Jarndyce she plays at housekeeping, and she is at the same time his "daughter" and his fiancée.

The submerged motive in Esther's life which becomes increasingly definite is her search for a mother. When her mother turns out to be Lady Dedlock, we see that the "mystery" of Esther's parentage is charged with as much social as personal significance. Esther is related in ways she does not understand with social worlds whose existence she is scarcely aware of. The split source of the narrative in *Bleak House* is a function of this larger mystery. It allows Dickens to create groups which are apparently (but only apparently) unconnected; and the convergence of the two narrative lines reveals the interconnectedness of the "separate" worlds and characters of the novel. The necessary relationships of blood, of feeling and responsibility, irresistibly assert themselves. The melodrama and the mystery turn on the fact that the fashionable world of the Dedlocks, Chancery lane, and the hell of Tom-All-Alone are all inescapably related. Mystery is ironically transformed into moral criticism.

Esther's narrative, though its final unity is of subject or theme, has a personal and emotional center of reference. It thus has some of the unifying advantages of plot, of referring events to dominant characters. The unity of the "author's" part of the novel, on the other

hand, depends almost entirely on the fusion of theme and dominant tone. The anonymous narrative centers on the discrepancy between reality and appearance—between surface and depth, pretention and fact, anachronism and progress, dead ritual and live act. The tone is marked by an energetic irony suppressing an enormous violence of feeling. Style and attitude are Carlylean. An elaborate system of ironic imagery exposes the falsity or emptiness of the conventional social symbols—many of which pass for human beings.

The style establishes itself with immense authority in the first chapter. A panoramic movement centers London in Chancery, and reduces both to a single complex image of mud and fog: the fog hinting at universal obfuscation; the mud suggesting the prehistoric world of the flood, still unevolved, while it "accounts for" the ritual futility, the slipping and sliding, of the lawyers' activity. All London is reduced to a single pattern. The lawyers in Chancery mime the people outside; they are "mistily" engaged, "tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities." From Mr. Tangle, honorifically addressing the Lord High Chancellor, "slides" out a word very like *mud*: "Mlud." "Thus, in the midst of the mud and at the heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery," like the extinct megalossaurus that Dickens mentioned earlier, except that the Chancellor is unaccountably not extinct. Chesney Wold, the ancestral seat of the Dedlocks, is in the first, definitive description also the world of the flood; and the deluge motif, twice announced, continues to reappear, with variations. In Chapter XIX (to take a single example) the flood has temporarily receded: "The Temple, Chancery Lane, Sergeants' Inn, and Lincoln's Inn even unto the Fields, are like tidal harbours at low water; where stranded proceedings, offices at anchor, idle clerks lounging on lop-sided stools that will not recover their perpendicular until the current of Term sets in, lie high and dry upon the ooze of the long vacation."¹

In the anonymous narrative particularly, characters are used metonymically: they exist less for their own sake than for their ability to characterize their "world" or their class. Volumnia Dedlock (a "peachy cheeked" and "skeleton throated" "charmer," no longer young) perfectly images the "perpetual stoppage" the Dedlocks oppose to the "moving age" in which they live. Similarly, individuals (in an exaggeration of Dickens' usual mode of characterization) may

¹ *Bleak House*, p. 246. All my quotations from *Bleak House* are from the Everyman edition.

be represented by parts of their persons. The family grandiosity of the Dedlocks takes up its residence in Sir Leicester's ears. When the ironmaster Rouncewell assaults them with what Sir Leicester considers "Wat Tylerism" he is astounded, but he is "obliged to believe a pair of ears that have been handed down to him by such a family."

One of the dominant ironic images exposing the discrepancy between fact and pretension and linking widely separated characters in the novel is that of empty containers, or surfaces which have no depth. The extremely righteous Chadband is not only a smoking oil factory, but a vessel, and not so much a vessel of the spirit of God as a "gorging vessel," always requiring to be filled. The same glossing over of the inane or the non-existent is managed by whole families and social orders, and by officially constituted authority. The Dedlocks of the past are represented entirely by their tombs and portraits, as the living fashionable world is represented by its mirrors, and Lady Dedlock by her particularly handsome and imposing portrait. Tulkinghorn's funeral is attended not by his upper-class clients, but by "inconsolable carriages": "The peerage contributes more four-wheeled affliction than has ever been seen in that neighbourhood. . . . The Duke of Foodle sends a splendid pile of dust and ashes, with silver wheel-boxes, patent axles, all the last improvements, and three bereaved worms, six feet high, holding on behind, in a bunch of woe" (679). Krook, reduced to a small heap of ashes by his spontaneous combustion, is nevertheless buried in a six-foot coffin, the court having insisted that "the fiction of a full-sized coffin should be preserved, though there is so little to put in it." And the desk which Wholes repeatedly strikes for Richard Carstone's benefit, staunchly averring, "'This desk is your rock sir!'" sounds "as hollow as a coffin."

The thematic and tonal integrity of the anonymous narrative is achieved largely by exploiting the unifying possibilities of internal analogy and parody. Settings, characters, and motifs mock one another, as in distorting mirrors. The result is an elaborate system of interlocking worlds.

As I have already suggested, the linkage is often by dominant images, which give to varied settings a common and pervasive tonality. But the effect is never simple or static. One controlling image follows, without superseding, another. Chancery, at first all mud and fog, is later reflected in Krook's rag and bottle shop; and the rust, must, and cobwebs to which Krook is so devoted introduce new images for Chancery, which are developed later (in Chapter XIX, for ex-

ample): "Over all the legal neighbourhood, there hangs, like some great veil of rust, or gigantic cobweb, the idleness and pensiveness of the long vacation." Both Tulkinghorn and Vholes, lawyers and animals of prey, have a particular liking for dust. Tulkinghorn's offices are a "lowering magazine of dust." Vholes' desk, when he strikes it, sounds as if "ashes were falling on ashes, and dust on dust." Krook's shop is later summed up by its heaps of worthless paper, an image exploited particularly in the Smallweeds' ratlike investigations of Krook's mountains of paper after they inherit his belongings. Finally, the development returns full circle in the closing chapters. When the Jarndyce suit in Chancery is brought to a close because the costs of the trial have exhausted the estate, the whole suit is finally reduced to a single image: the tons of paper recording the endless processes of the trial which are dumped in the courtroom.

Sometimes the connection between distinct settings is established by their allusion to a common myth. The suggestion in the first chapter that Chancery is hell (in the phrase "the outermost circle of such evil") is much more strongly asserted in the description of Krook's shop. Krook's roomer, Nemo, is said to have sold himself to the devil (who is both Krook and Lord High Chancellor), and Krook is on fire within—a smouldering which is to culminate in his being violently consumed by his own evil in the spontaneous combustion episode. The Smallweed establishment, where Grandfather Smallweed is several times scorched by being placed too near the fire, and where he occupies his idle time by watching the "fire—and the boiling and the roasting," is also a foretaste of hell, and Trooper George is in no doubt as to Grandfather Smallweed's eternal fate. The third version of hell is Tom-all-Alone's. When Inspector Bucket and Mr. Snagsby, heroic visitors, descend into the underworld the crowd is "like a concourse of imprisoned demons," "flitting, and whistling, and skulking about them."

Bleak House is full of persons whose main function is parody, who repeat the serious or the pathetic in the comic, the realistic or the melodramatic in the surrealist or the bizarre. Little Swills is a deliberate and habitual mimic who by parodying a "scene of real life"—the inquest into Nemo's death—turns it into a kind of folk ballad. Guppy, a minnow in the sharky sea of lawyers, unconsciously parodies Inspector Bucket. Before Bucket has even begun his investigations, Guppy in his own blunderingly cunning way has gone far towards solving the mystery of Esther's birth. In the sentimentality, disloyalty,

and egregious confidence of his "love" for Esther, Guppy is a kind of parody-foil to Allan Woodcourt. Mrs. Snagsby's violently impotent jealousy ("busily laying trains of gunpowder" in her imagination) parodies the more dangerous and melodramatic jealousy of the murderous Mlle. Hortense. And Krook is of course a monstrous parody of the Lord High Chancellor.

The same systematic use of analogy and parody that organizes the "author's" narrative links the two narratives and helps to make of them a complex whole. Turveydrop, for example, in Esther's narrative, crosses its boundaries to become an absurd parody of the *passé* dandyism of the fashionable world of the author's narrative:

He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. . . . he stood poised on one leg, in a high-shouldered, round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature. . . . (p. 181)

Finally, the motifs of Esther's story are sometimes reflected in the other narrative. Bleak House is a fairy-tale world of orphans and fairy "godfather" where people habitually communicate in tag-ends of nursery rhymes. Esther herself is a kind of Cinderella who busies herself about the household, and whose devotion to Jarndyce is rewarded by his transformation into Allan Woodcourt, the inhabitant of a new and cozier Bleak House. The Smallweed family, as described by the anonymous voice, is an ironic negation of the childish world and the fairy-tale motif of Esther's story. No Smallweed, for generations, has ever been young, except Grandmother Smallweed, who in the utter decline of her faculties is enjoying her first childhood. Skimpole, in Esther's story, has, on the other hand, never grown up. Everywhere in the novel, youth and age trade places. Tulkinghorn has "aged without experience of genial youth," and Judy Smallweed "never owned a doll, never heard of Cinderella, never played at any game. . . . And her twin brother couldn't wind up a top for his life. He knows no more of Jack the Giant Killer, or of Sinbad the Sailor, than he knows of the people in the stars" (p. 276). The four Smallweeds are "ghastly cherubim"; Grandmother Smallweed is a "broom-

stick witch," and Grandfather is not only a "goblin" and "harlequin" but a "doll" and "puppet." As horrible dolls and goblins, the nightmares of childish fantasy, the Smallweeds are perverse distortions of Esther's experience and of the Bleak House world.

Mystery, treated melodramatically in Esther's story, is often treated comically or satirically by the "author"—as in Guppy's and Weevle's spying on Krook, only to be frightened out of their wits by his macabre and inexplicable combustion. And the pastoral profusion of Boythorn's house in the country, where Esther convalesces from small-pox, is mocked by Lincoln's Inn Fields—"pleasant fields, where the sheep are all made into parchment, the goats into wigs, and the pasture into chaff."²

The two narratives in *Bleak House* reflect one another, and the multiplied characters and events of the novel are the thousand metamorphoses of a single reality. The ruined children and perverted families of Esther's story, like the anachronisms, stoppages, and false appearances exposed by the "author," are ironic variations on a single theme—the perversion of nature into not-nature. This theme is embodied in all the parts of the novel, down to the smallest descriptive details. Abstractions are suddenly brought to a kind of sickly life, as when Vholes tells Richard Carstone, "The suit does not sleep; we wake it up, we air it, we walk it about." The living and the non-living exchange attributes, roles, appearances: "You will have the goodness to make these materials into two members of parliament, and to send them home when done." Houses are transformed into their inhabitants, and transfixed again into stone, in a riot of animating and de-animating metaphors:

It is a dull street under the best conditions; where the two long rows of houses stare at each other with that severity, that half-a-dozen of its greatest mansions seem to have been slowly stared into stone, rather than originally built in that material. It is a street of such dismal grandeur, so determined not to condescend to liveliness, that the doors and windows hold a gloomy state of their own in black paint and dust, and the echoing mews behind have a dry and massive appearance, as if they were reserved to stable the stone chargers of noble statues. Complicated garnish of iron-work entwines itself over the flights of steps in this awful street; and, from these petrified

² For "pastoral" satire in *Bleak House*, see Louis Crompton, "Satire and Symbolism in *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, XII (1958), 284-303.

bowers, extinguishers for obsolete flambeaux gasp at the up-start gas. (p. 622)

This does not by any means exhaust Dickens' metamorphic ingenuity. In *Bleak House* the order of animal existences, a degeneration of the human, is nearly as full as the human world. In Lincoln's Inn the lawyers lie "like maggots in nuts," and in Tom-all-Alone's the poor sleep in "maggot numbers." The Smallweeds are a whole bestiary of monkeys, spiders, parrots, scorpions, toads, grubs, magpies, jackdaws, pigs, and swine. Tulkinghorn is a "species of large rook." A distressingly large proportion of the animals live by preying on human life. Vholes, the lawyer-serpent, spends half the book inch by inch ingesting Richard Carstone, finishing him off with a final gulp. But the system has, after all, its justification: "Make man-eating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses."

The perversion of nature which is expressed in the minutest details and last elaborations of Dickens' style collects itself into larger and larger aggregations and ascends to a coherence which rivals nature itself. The elaborate motif linking Esther's experience, Chancery, the fashionable world of the Dedlocks, and eventually seeming to involve the whole of society, is that of a "system" superseding the system of nature: "The fashionable world—tremendous orb, nearly five miles round—is in full swing, and the solar system works respectfully at its appointed distances. . . . It is morning in the great world; afternoon according to the little sun" (pp. 619-20). When Gridley complains of his treatment in an interminable Chancery suit which is driving him mad, he is told that he "'mustn't look to individuals. It's the system.'" Richard Carstone, obsessed by his suit, suffers from "the careless spirit of a gamester, who felt that he was part of a great gambling system." The whole of society, in fact, may be conceived abstractly as a system. Harold Skimpole considers that his "business in the social system is to be agreeable. . . . It's a system of harmony." Sir Leicester Dedlock thinks the "systematic" coherence of established customs, groups, and so on is as necessary and fundamental as the coherence of the system of nature, and at any change taking place in it he fears that "'the floodgates of society are burst open, and the waters have—a—obliterated the landmarks of the framework of the cohesion by which things are held together.'" Finally Conversation Kenge masterfully sums up the necessity for the system of equity: "'We are a great country, Mr. Jarndyce, we are a very great country.

This is a great system, Mr. Jarndyce, and would you wish a great country to have a little system? No really, really!' He said this at the stair-head, gently waving his right hand as if it were a silver trowel, with which to spread the cement of his words on the structure of the system, and consolidate it for a thousand ages" (p. 805).

This vision of the consolidation and persistence, through eons, of a perverse organization competing with nature itself is one of the final comments on the Jarndyce case, and the justification of the procedures by which the suit has been carried to its ruinous conclusion. The only weight *against* the system is thrown into the balance at the end of the novel when Esther and Allan Woodcourt establish a center of "goodness" carrying on that of the original Bleak House. But only the *small* area, it seems, is capable of salvation. Esther's goodness proves unable to affect the massively entrenched "systematic" evil of whole classes and professions. With Esther's marriage, we are perhaps permitted to imagine that the seed of a new order has been sown, under the genial supervision of the magician Jarndyce; but Chancery and the fashionable world, monsters of prehistory, remain unslain. Dickens, like E. M. Forster, suggests that we are saved one by one, in our personal relations, not in our generalized and abstract organizations. He seems to deny that good *can* come from groups and organizations. It flows only from the activity of individuals of superior sympathy and responsibility responding to other individuals.

The division of the story between Esther and an anonymous narrator segregates good from evil, and gives the good a specific locus—in such people as Esther Summerson, and in Bleak House. Bleak House is the fantastic and perhaps regressive retreat of the embattled saints—the orphans and their benevolent protector. Richard Carstone, unlike Esther, abandons the Bleak House retreat, and scorns the protection of his guardian. Obsessed as he is by "Great Expectations," Richard's fate is controlled by the abstract mechanism of Chancery, and by the parasites on it. The subject of his story is the destructive relation between an individual and a dehumanized social system of enormous extent and immovability. Esther survives, while Richard does not. The difference in their fates results largely from the fact that Richard throws himself into the destructive element, while Esther keeps herself apart from it, refusing to submit herself to any organization, class, or abstract theory—whether it be Chancery, the fashionable world, or "telescopic" philanthropy. Esther's story and Richard's are con-

nected in being positive and negative "proofs" of the destructiveness of a corrupt and disorganized society.

Esther's part as an actor in the novel is relatively small. The world of *Bleak House* is too large and too scattered to be focussed on a single person. But as narrator she adds to the novel a center of "normal" consciousness, of emotional life and felt experience, which are necessary to define the abnormalities of the life and persons around her. In Esther, Dickens dramatizes the subject of all his novels: the struggle towards fulfillment of "natural" feelings in a world of abnormal, false, and cruel systems of belief, behavior, and human relationships. Esther's inner experience is the necessary complement of the author's entirely external ironic description. Without this "life" the elaborate satirical portrait of a disorganized society would be meaningless, or would lack what for Dickens is meaning—the fulfilled affective life of the individual. In dividing the story between two narrators Dickens has put a gulf between the self on one side, and public, organized, "bureaucratic" society on the other.

The double point of view in *Bleak House*, then, has its reasons. But it also has a very serious limitation. The limitation is in the quality of the consciousness Dickens has chosen as alternate narrator and representative of the self. Esther exists in the novel both as registering consciousness and as an ideal standard of moral values (the great ones being selflessness and energy in doing the duty which lies nearest). Other characters' admiring devotion to her is presented in her own narrative, not only through dialogue, but (and this is much more damaging) through her own summary. The result is that she appears to be convinced of her own saintliness, and to be at the greatest pains to dissemble her opinion. In failing to recognize that Esther's actions would in themselves communicate her virtue to us, without this coy self-consciousness, Dickens proves that he himself has not "realized" her character: he is evidently unable to *imagine* such selflessness as Esther's. Continuing to think longingly of her dolls, and accepting gratefully the "doll's house" (her own phrase) model of *Bleak House* into which John Jarndyce thrusts her with her new husband, Esther becomes a more insidious study of abnormal childhood than the overt study in the novel, Harold Skimpole. She becomes a particularly perverse and sentimental expression of Dickens' life-long over-valuation of the experience of the child. The ending of Esther's story, with its implied doctrine that our salvation requires us to be childish, is a

sentimental and obviously inadequate solution to the serious moral and social problems Dickens raises.

At their most extreme divergence, the two points of view from which *Bleak House* is narrated—the sentimental and the ironic-satiric—are perhaps simply incompatible. The two narratives seem almost a product of schizophrenia, and *Bleak House* seems to be two novels: a melodramatic fairy-tale, and an extraordinarily bitter and inclusive social satire. What prevents this incompatibility from hopelessly splitting the novel is the fact that the solid core of *Bleak House* is dramatic action and speech—a center where the difference between the two narrators is slight. The energy and invention of *Bleak House* are in its satire. The power of the novel is not only in the “author’s” elaborately ironic descriptions, but in the equally damning observations registered by Esther herself when her attention is not on herself or on her benevolent guardian—when she is neither moralizing nor sentimentalizing. Esther lacks the suppressed violence and underlined irony of the author-narrator, but she records, largely without comment, the same abnormalities that he does. The Pardiggles and Jellybys, Skimpole and Vholes of her experience are no less monstrous than the Tulkinghorn and Smallweeds of the other narrative, and what Esther sees in the elder Turveydrop is precisely what the anonymous observer, more wide-ranging, sees in the fashionable world as a whole. What is sentimental and self-righteous in Esther, then, is largely corrected by the whole context in which she exists. And this context is itself partly a product of her own observation. The insufficiencies of Dickens’ view of her are absorbed into the complexity of the total structure of the novel.

The final unity of *Bleak House* is not so much one of plot (too many characters are irrelevant to what happens) or of point of view (the anonymous point of view sometimes undercuts Esther’s) as of theme and satiric intention. In both Esther’s and the author’s narrative, nature (though it sometimes has its revenge) has everywhere been distorted—by system, mechanism, theory, degeneration into lower forms of life. This is the fact which is repeated and mirrored in the worlds and social strata and characters of *Bleak House*. Abstractly stated, the theme is nothing. In the totality of its concrete illustrations—treated comically, ironically, mysteriously, or portentously—it is magnificent. And the great instrument of the theme in *Bleak House* is the style. The style, more accurately, is the thorough penetration of every detail by the theme.

At the hands of a great artist, reality always undergoes a considerable transformation. Dickens' re-creation of reality is violent—as violent as Swift's, for example, in *Gulliver's Travels*. In both works, the violence of the distortion seems to measure the intensity of the satirist's feeling. In *Gulliver's Travels* the metamorphosis is achieved by transporting us into a different world, made fantastic by the changing of one or two fundamental facts, proportions, or "rules" of standard reality. Swift's effect is largely in the discrepancy between a fantastic world and the pedantic plausibility and the detailed matter-of-factness of the style in which it is described. Unlike Swift's, Dickens' changes are not in the very laws and ground of his world; his metamorphosis of reality is in the *details* of his world. Dickens' world is the everyday world distorted. Swift's is a fantasy world made plausible. Dickens works not only by suggestion, rhetorical device, wit, and tone, as Swift does, but by a much greater elaboration of mimicry and significant gesture. Sir Leicester speaks "as if he were nodding down at the man from a Mount," Conversation Kenge busily employs the "silver trowel" of his rhetoric, Chadband mouths a word often on his lips—"Terewth"—and narrative bursts into mimesis, concrete dramatic rendering.

The style of *Bleak House* is of course a *tour de force*. Its brilliance is forced on Dickens by the necessity of bringing his huge *dramatis personae* into some kind of order, of bridging the gap between the two voices of the novel, and of fusing the various forms of which the novel is composed. It is melodrama, fairy-tale, mystery, and satire, all at once. Each form subtly alters the others. The satire is hot and perspiring rather than cold and dry, and the irony is more melodramatic than dead-pan. In the anonymous narrative the fairy-tale has its ironic reflection, pastoral turns to satire, and mystery is treated comically and satirically. *Bleak House* turns back upon itself. Its elements are made to reflect upon and alter one another by a glittering virtuosity of style.

In the process, characters are stylized; they are distorted and reduced to the elements that are necessary to the expression of a single theme, and to the creation of a very emphatic concrete pattern. They become clusters of external signs ("poetically" repeated, as T. S. Eliot says). As in all Dickens' novels, most characters are reduced to characteristics, and this is the defect as well as the peculiar virtue of Dickens' characterization. This reduction fits perfectly the later, more satiric novels—particularly *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*—where it is in-

tended to dehumanize the characters. In these later novels, "nature," except as a standard which is everywhere *implied*, tends to disappear, or to appear only intermittently, located in specific characters or places. This is the usual and perhaps the inevitable practice of satire. In the interest of a more consistent texture, Dickens decisively distinguishes scene and character (most characters) from "reality." The primary concern of the anonymous narrator in *Bleak House* is often with scene, "background." From the background characters emerge. But they are still part of the scene, done in its terms. (Both Chancery and Tulkinghorn, for example, are largely composed of dust.) Both characters and scene are reduced to brief linguistic motifs which are amenable to ironic or satiric or simply insistent repetition. The first description of a character or scene is often elaborate, as in the first description of Chancery or Chesney Wold or the nest of the Smallweeds. After the first full description, Dickens selects significant images (Chancery's mud, for example), gestures (Vholes's ingestion of Richard), or clichés of speech (Chadband's "Terewth") to stand as brief signals of the person or scene. He creates his world by repetition and thematic development of these stylistic elements. He works *towards* the concentration of metaphor or symbol. In later appearances of a setting or person, the explanatory part of the initial description is suppressed. "As if" turns into direct assertion; comparison becomes identity; simile develops into metaphor. Sometimes the metamorphosis takes place in a single paragraph. Development is by repetition and by addition to the original signs; and by repeating and varying motifs previously established (as the fairy-tale motif of *Bleak House* is distorted in the Smallweeds, and in Krook's role as ogre), Dickens achieves an increasing density of meaning and internal connection. In *Bleak House* these stylistic devices serve the needs of concentration and identity within complexity. It is an essential purpose of *Bleak House* to impress the image of chaos on us, but the image itself escapes chaos; it is controlled and unified by the style.

Lawrence's Western Path: "Mornings in Mexico"

1

"We can't go back to the savages: not a stride," said D. H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature*; Melville had tried and failed, and "I know now that I could never go back." Lawrence had always distrusted that renegade impulse: Ursula Brangwen of *The Rainbow*, for example, had rejected a faun-like suitor who asked her to share his Eden. But after travelling to Ceylon and Australia, across the Pacific, and through the American Southwest, Lawrence knew he was no "primitivist." In 1922 he said of the Apaches, "I don't want to go back to them, ah, never. . . . Always onward, still further." He could not "cluster at the drum any more."

Then from 1923 to 1925 he wrote *Mornings in Mexico* and *The Plumed Serpent*—invitations, it would seem, for us all to cluster at the drum. But he had not really reversed himself. In fact, *Mornings in Mexico*, the simpler and more schematic of the two works, is a useful introduction to that entire period in his career, that paradoxical "savage pilgrimage" which is still so generally misunderstood.

Even critics attacking the "primitivism" of these travel-sketches have seen complications. Wyndham Lewis, noting some distaste for savagery, concluded that the "glaring paradox" was "certainly puzzling." Carleton Beals found the sketches "laughably" to combine the sentimentality and the dislike which Lawrence criticized as common attitudes toward the Indians. But Lawrence seems muddled only if we ignore the design of the book itself. The usual and erroneous assumption is that he simply took his four original "Mornings" (written in Oaxaca during December 1924) and tacked on three earlier essays and a tail-piece—and that he could have tacked on still more. Richard Aldington, for example, has said that all the other essays on Old and New Mexico were strangely omitted and "should be added." However, Lawrence selected and arranged his essays so that the book

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"places" his various points of view as stages on a literary and quite unchronological journey. Once perceived, that design largely clarifies the paradox that bothered Lewis and Beals; and it clarifies also the strange image that Lawrence used in discussing Melville's primitivism. Though we can take not even a stride back toward the savages, he said, we "can take a great curve in their direction, onwards."

2

The first essay, "Corasmin and the Parrots," is a brisk but oblique introduction. Lawrence presents himself as merely "one little individual looking at a bit of sky and trees, then looking down at the page of his exercise book." That is no false modesty but the opening development of his implicit theme: the limits and the uniqueness of each being. From his *patio* he can smell carnations, *ocote* wood, coffee, leaves, morning, and even Mexico—for "Mexico has a faint, physical scent of her own, as each human being has. And this is a curious, inexplicable scent, in which there are resin and perspiration and sunburned earth and urine among other things." From that recognition of the curious scent emitted by each being, Lawrence leads us toward a comic acceptance. He describes the parrots' whistling, which sardonically imitates that of Rosalino, the Indian *mozo*. Then the parrots imitate someone calling the dog, and pour an incredibly "suave, prussic-acid sarcasm" over the human voice. "Is it possible that we are so absolutely, so innocently, so *ab ovo* ridiculous?" It is not only possible but patent.

When the little dog Corasmin appears, also mocked by the parrots and seeming to pretend indifference, Henley's "Invictus" comes to mind. "But that is human bombast, and a little too ridiculous even for Corasmin," who is "not going to throw out his chest in a real lust of self-pity. That belongs to the next cycle of evolution." Though evolution now seems devolution, Lawrence's sardonic beasts clearly represent no ideal of "mindlessness." Poets have often used them to make us see ourselves as others see us.

This ironic fable is now expanded by means of the Aztec myth of creation. After each Sun or World is destroyed, a few creatures remain to jeer at the new order of life. But the new is not really inferior. The ironies cut both ways. The parrot jeers like an "ineffectual old aristocrat" because he won't admit that the tide of creation has moved beyond him, that he has been superseded by something radically different. He won't admit the gulf of the "other dimension." "You

and I," Lawrence says to Corasmin, "we admit it." But the other animals "all wind themselves up and wriggle inside the cage of the other dimension, hating it. And those that have voices jeer, and those that have mouths bite, and the insects that haven't even mouths, they turn up their tails and nip with them, or sting." In other words, all malevolence results from a creature's refusal to accept a limited place in the infinite variety of creation.

Lawrence closes as he began, on a note of light humility. He recognizes that he and Rosalino do not fully admit the "other dimension" separating them from one another; and he asks finally, "what will come, in the other dimension, when we are superseded?" As the book proceeds, that question will gradually assume a double meaning—for man is more than a comically limited animal. It is the paradox of the book that one who accepts his limits, who allows himself to be superseded, may be superseded by a new self. No longer exerting his will over other creatures or over his own depths, he opens himself to the tide of a continual creation, which may then carry him onward. And the question answered by the book is: how may this growth occur through Lawrence's accepting the "otherness" of Rosalino?

Neither the paradox nor the question is explicitly formulated, partly because of the book's piecemeal composition, but mainly because of its dramatic method. Though the essays seem expository, the book's action appears in the gradually deepening insight of the "one little individual" who is ostensibly the writer but is really the main character. Like Birkin of *Women in Love*, Lawrence had a genius for self-travesty, for playing an inferior but strategic role. And in *Mornings in Mexico* he allowed his "tourist" *persona* to follow a path which is evident in the novels from *The White Peacock* onward but is presented with new urgency in *The Lost Girl*, *St. Mawr*, *The Plumed Serpent*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The ego must descend to meet and accept what seems darkly inferior and destructive but is really its own unconscious life-source—projected upon a man, an animal, a people, or a landscape. If that acceptance occurs, if the marriage with the "other" or the "unconscious" is consummated, the closed and defensive ego may be transcended. A new self may step free, open to the creative flux beyond and within. Then only is true meeting possible.

Though Lawrence knew analogues of that path in such doctrines as the alchemists' marriage of opposites, Blake's redemption of the emanation, and Jung's process of individuation, he refused to substitute

any system for immediate experience. In fact, both the strength and the weakness of his novelistic technique result from the immediacy with which he renders the twists and turns of the path. He so lends himself to the "shimmer" of his characters' feelings that his novels either gain a marvelous richness or, the point of view being lost, shatter amid conflicting moods. Like the novels, *Mornings in Mexico* contains a vacillating progression of attitudes, each having all the intensity of a momentary experience. The book is thereby weakened in "logical" clarity, but it gains some of the novels' power to "inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness." As Lawrence himself appears to grow, he carries us with him.

The difficulty of abandoning the view that Rosalino is but an inferior version of himself, of admitting the Indian's valid "otherness," provides the implicit theme of the next two essays. At first Lawrence's jeering and yearning indicate that the "other dimension" is for him still a "cage," but gradually he becomes a sympathetic observer. In "Walk to Huayapa" his progress begins at once. The tight irritation with the "dreary spectacle" of humanity enjoying itself, which makes him prefer to stay "in the hermitage of the *patio*," yields to the call of the "peculiar looseness" of the Sunday morning sunshine. But that slight breach in the ego is followed by a slight recoil: he dwells upon Rosalino's refrain, "as inevitable as the parrot's 'Perro!' 'Come no, Señor?'—'How not, Señor?'" Then condescension yields again to the call of something beyond. "'I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my strength.' At least one can always do *that*, in Mexico." Beyond the valley flat, "wild and exalted with sunshine," bank the "stiffly pleated mountains." They are "clothed smokily with pine," and "like a woman in a gauze *rebozo*, they rear in a rich blue fume that is almost corn-flower blue in the clefts." The range seems like "some splendid lizard with a wavering, royal-blue crest down the ridge of his back, and pale belly, and soft, pinky-fawn claws, on the plain." The images evoke that life for which his tense ego yearns as for its own obscurely felt source and necessary complement. But he recoils again on hearing Rosalino's flat, resigned "*Quien sabe, Señor?*" "Among the Indians it is not becoming to know anything, not even one's own name." And soon comes the tart reflection, softened only a little by a distrancing irony, "The Americans would call him a dumbbell." No wonder "human life" now, seems to this tourist "isolated, external to its surroundings, and cut off tinily from the environment."

Such opening and closing of the consciousness alternate rhythmically throughout the essay. Worn by the heat, the tourist vents his spleen against the many "dumb-bells of the land" who make it difficult to find fruit for lunch. But a flickering irony reminds us of another Lawrence who sees and accepts more completely: "We don't belong to the ruling race for nothing," he pronounces as they march into a yard where a *fiesta* is taking place. And at intervals he admires all that seems (like Huayapa itself in the distance) "magical, alone," yet organically part of its world and possessing a darkly luminous power. Two boys are bathing in a creek, "stooping with knees together and throwing water over themselves, rising, gleaming dark coffee-red in the sun, wetly." And in the stream above Huayapa are two men and a woman, "their brown-orange giving off a glow in the shadow," their wet hair seeming "to steam blue-blackness." Relaxing in this charged atmosphere, Lawrence concludes that the Indian "richness of the flesh . . . goes, perhaps, with the complete absence of what we call 'spirit.'"

The partly opened ego may so explain its vacillations, but the anti-thesis is too pat. At least twice the abstracted "flesh" and "spirit" nearly forgotten, Lawrence had begun to learn how one may transcend the "other dimension" without denying its existence. Being passed by two women who greeted them with typically Indian "suppressed voices," he and Rosalino had glanced at each other in sardonic acceptance. And after lunch a more complex episode had occurred. An old woman, described in almost affectionate detail, came "marching down the aqueduct with black bare feet, holding three or four *chirimoyas* to her bosom." After lecturing them on the difference between aqueduct water and stream water, and looking inquisitively at their bottle of lemonade, she gave them the unripe *chirimoyas*, refusing any payment. "Remain with God," she said and "marched impatiently off." Again the two men glanced at each other, and Rosalino gave a "silent, delighted, derisive laugh," adding that the *chirimoyas* were not good. Later he proved to be right. "'The old woman of Huayapa,' said Rosalino, reminiscent." But Lawrence adds: "However, she had got her bottle. When we had drunk the lemonade, we sent Rosalino to give her the empty wine-bottle, and she made him another sententious little speech. But to her the bottle was a treasure."

Each party in this brief meeting, so charged with silent communication, receives his reward; and pride begins to yield to delight and mutual respect. Paradoxically, as one admits "otherness" he discovers,

behind the difference of racial type, both individuality and a common humanity. And we may see Lawrence almost ready for that discovery as the essay concludes with his relaxed acceptance of the Mexican landscape—"the perfect, soft, high blue sky overhead, where the hawks and the ragged-winged *zopilotes* sway and diminish"—and of the Mexican moment: "*mañana es otro día*."

In "The Mozo" the individuality and humanity of Rosalino appear more fully. At first, with his "sensitiveness and aloneness, as if he were a mother's boy," he seems a minor exception to the Indian type; and Lawrence jeeringly satirizes the type itself, symbolized by the sacrificial knife born of the Aztec earth-mother. However, the satire soon becomes double-edged: as it moves from the Indian's grim violence to his view of the white as a "sort of phenomenon" or "extraordinary white monkey," it begins to mock the white man's passion for "invisible exactitudes" of time, distance, and possessions, and his vices of the will—the "monkey-virtue" of charity and the "incessant tick-tack of work." From this point of view the Indian irresponsibility has a partial defense: "Strip away memory, strip away forethought and care; leave the moment, stark and sharp and without consciousness, like the obsidian knife." The diatribe against Indian cruelty has become an ironic contrast of the time-binding and time-bound ego of European culture with the pure awareness of the child, the "primitive," or the mystic. The implicit ideal behind this reverie is a consciousness in time yet not of it, transcending both the limited awareness here attributed to the Indian and the insane possessiveness of the white man.

But rather than develop the meaning of a state beyond the present knowledge of his tourist *persona*, Lawrence returns to the apparent exception. With increasing patience and sympathy he traces Rosalino's aspirations and fears, his vacillation between happiness and hatred after their Sunday walk. Then, saved for its proper place in the drama of Lawrence's own vacillating yet progressing consciousness, comes a final piece of information. A year ago Rosalino had been drafted by the revolutionaries, had refused, and had been beaten and left for dead. "This explains his fear of furniture-carrying"—for which Lawrence earlier calls him a "fool"—"and his fear of being caught." First a "dumb-bell," then a sensitive exception, Rosalino now seems "one of those, like myself, who have a horror of serving in a mass of men, or even of being mixed up with a mass of men." But matters do not rest here. Aurelio, a friend's *mozo*, fared even worse, and Lawrence recounts the tale of torture and courageous escape, con-

cluding with praise for Aurelio's strength and intelligence. That view of the two individuals suddenly makes possible a more sympathetic acceptance of their race: "Not to be *caught*! It must have been the prevailing motive of Indian-Mexico life since long before Montezuma marched his prisoners to sacrifice."

So the essay ends, the emotional meaning of the sacrificial knife having been completely reversed. The tourist has brooded upon all that is most violent and repulsive in the alien culture, gradually finding common ground. But the writer himself was not undergoing that experience quite so immediately. His negative first impressions had appeared almost two years earlier in "Au Revoir, U. S. A.," and he had since been dramatizing the struggle to move beyond them in *The Plumed Serpent*, now substantially finished. The most striking evidence, however, for the dramatic method of *Mornings in Mexico* is the fact that the next essay, "Market Day," is chronologically out of place. Originally second, it now completes the gradual progress toward acceptance and true meeting.

In making that change, Lawrence covered his tracks with reasonable success. In manuscript (according to E. W. Tedlock's description) the four Oaxaca essays were called "Friday Morning," "Saturday Morning," "Sunday Morning," and "Monday Morning." But in the final version of the Friday essay, "Corasmin and the Parrots," the only reference to day or date is the remark that "it is Christmas next week"—hence we can proceed without break to Sunday and Monday. And because the Monday essay, "The Mozo," actually describes Rosalino's moodiness from Monday on through Friday, we are not surprised when "Market Day" now begins: "This is the last Saturday before Christmas." Few readers will recall the statement three essays back and wonder why Christmas has not yet occurred. On inspection, however, some other oblique references betray the rearrangement. In Huayapa Lawrence finds traces of Thursday's *fiesta* in honor of the Virgin of Soledad; since that *fiesta* always falls on December 18, Sunday must be December 21. (He also says, "To-morrow is the shortest day.") "The Mozo" therefore covers the 22nd through the 26th—but it omits any specific reference to Christmas. Lawrence says merely, "Thursday was *fiesta*," though he does describe "a great wafer of a pancake with sweet stuff on it," which happens to be the Christmas *buñuelo* traditional in Oaxaca. But unless we are familiar with the Christmas season there, we may come to "Market Day," December 20, quite unaware that calendar time has suddenly moved backward.

Psychological time has moved onward. No longer struggling with Rosalino's moods and his own, Lawrence can see Christmas not as a nameless Indian *fiesta* but as a time of joyous rebirth. "The next year will be momentous, one feels." And on this Saturday he takes part in an essentially religious ceremony of communion. From the *patio* he can see the rising sun, the bursting and swaying flowers—a resurgence that comes to a momentary climax in the tall acacia: "Above itself it puts up whitish fingers of flowers, naked on the blue sky. And in the wind these fingers of flowers in the bare blue sky, sway, sway with the reeling, roundward motion of tree-tips in a wind." The empathic and circular description comes from a Lawrence no longer tensely aloof or yearning for a vitality that seems beyond or beneath him merely. "A restless morning, with clouds lower down, moving also with a larger roundward motion. Everything moving. Best to go out in motion too, the slow roundward motion like the hawks." Everything "seems slowly to circle and hover towards a central point," and he concludes: "If I have a way to go, it will be round the swoop of a bend impinging centripetal towards the centre. The straight course is hacked out in wounds, against the will of the world."

Now quite beyond the enclosure of *patio* or ego, he sees others moving toward the centre: "It is Saturday, and the white dots of men are threading down the trail over the bare humps to the plain, following the dark twinkle-movement of asses, the dark nodding of the woman's head as she rides between the baskets. Saturday and market-day, and morning, so the white specks of men, like sea-gulls on plough-land, come ebbing like sparks from the *palo-blanco*, over the fawn undulating of the valley slope." Human life no longer seems isolated amid its wild setting, and Lawrence speaks no longer of a primitive "richness of the flesh" but of the unknown basis of all communion: "Clothed darkness, faces of night, quickly, silently, with inexhaustible energy advancing to the town."

Like religion, he says, the market is a great excuse for "coming together to a centre, and commingling freely in a mixed, unsuspecting host." But Kate Leslie of *The Plumed Serpent*, before accepting the darker forces beyond her ego, had received a very different impression. For her the market was "fascinating" but repellent. "These people came, not for the joy of selling, but for the sullen contest with those who wanted what they had got. The strange, black resentment always present." She reminds us of Lawrence at Huayapa. But one who has assimilated that unconscious vitality, who is no longer fending it off

and projecting his own resentment, can see that the Mexicans come rather for the joy of "human contact." As Lawrence describes the bargain with the flower woman, he shifts from first to second person to identify us yet more closely with his tourist in this moment of meeting: "Off you go with multicoloured pinks, and the woman has had one more moment of contact, with a stranger, a perfect stranger. An intermingling of voices, a threading together of different wills. It is life." So too in the exchange with the huarache man:

"How much do you give?"

You refuse to answer. Instead you put the huaraches to your nose. The huarache man looks at his wife, and they laugh aloud.

"They smell," you say.

"No, Señor, they don't smell!"—and the two go off into fits of laughter.

The episode concludes with a mock-mournful shake of the head over the smell of the human excrement that the Indians use for tanning leather. Humorously accepting the repugnant, Lawrence enacts the position that the book's opening paragraphs had sketched in theory. As the Indians know, "Everything has its own smell, and the natural smell of huaraches is what it is. You might as well quarrel with an onion for smelling like an onion."

And as Blake knew, the acceptance of infinite variety allows all to appear in each. When the wild hillmen "cluster round the hat-stall, in a long, long suspense of indecision before they can commit themselves, trying on a new hat, their black hair gleams blue-black, and falls thick and rich over their foreheads, like gleaming bluey-black feathers. And one is reminded again of the blue-haired Buddha, with the lotus at his navel." At the centre of meeting, spirit manifests itself in flesh, quiet unity in wild multiplicity. The lotus blooms at the momentary navel of the world. That vision is not disturbed but expanded when Lawrence continues, "But already the fleas are travelling under one's clothing," and then says that many families will find no room at the inns tonight. In Huayapa he had impatiently compared his own wandering to that of the Holy Family on Christmas Eve, but now he contemplates the many asses in the courtyards, "drooping their ears with the eternal patience of the beast that knows better than any other beast that every road curves round to the same centre of rest, and hither and thither means nothing."

Next day the Indians will leave in the "strong swerve of repulsion, curved out and away again, into space." They will have gained only the momentary "touch, the spark of contact." Their few coins "will disappear as the stars disappear at daybreak, as they are meant to disappear. Everything is meant to disappear. Every curve plunges into the vortex and is lost, re-emerges with a certain relief and takes to the open, and there is lost again." Here an awareness of the moment merges with a consciousness of time that has lost all possessiveness. Lawrence realizes the implicit ideal of the satire on the "obsidian knife" and the "white monkey." And the intangible "spark of contact" finally seems like that reconciling image (drawn from occultism) which had haunted the violent oscillations of *The Plumed Serpent*: "Like the evening star, between the sun and the moon, and swayed by neither of them. The flashing intermediary, the evening star that is seen only at the dividing of the day and night, but then is more wonderful than either."

The Oaxaca essays dramatize the microcosmic and macrocosmic reconciliation—the movement toward unity of the self and community with all life—which may come when the ego accepts its finitude and descends to meet its complement. The tone of the essays therefore modulates strategically from that flippant jeering which Lawrence called in *The Plumed Serpent* the "unbearable note . . . underneath almost all modern utterance," and which he recognized in a 1914 letter to Garnett as dominant in his own surface consciousness, to the note struck by the "passionately religious man" that he knew himself fundamentally to be. Christmas, he said on this Saturday, "seems to need a red herald"—and these essays are a kind of Advent celebration. However, they herald neither the Babe of Bethlehem nor the Aztec obsidian knife but the child of the alchemists, born of the marriage of opposites and called in *Studies in Classic American Literature* the "homunculus of the new era."

3

"The next year will be momentous, one feels." So it must be if one realizes that the momentous is the momentary; and the next three essays, though written earlier, seem to sketch part of that year. Within the drama of *Mornings in Mexico*, "Indians and Entertainment" (a dateless introduction), "Dance of the Sprouting Corn" (Easter), and "The Hopi Snake Dance" (August) present the deeper exploration made possible by a curve toward the centre. They focus upon Indian

religion as a ritual enactment of cosmic meeting. Then "A Little Moonshine with Lemon" (November) completes the year by presenting the curve outward. Though the inclusion of earlier essays produces some choppiness, it is clear why Lawrence omitted such a piece as "Indians and an Englishman." For that description of his visit to the Apaches covers in itself the entire curve—from the ego's distant jeering to a central meeting and then to a sympathetic distance as a more fully conscious self passes "onward."

Lawrence introduces his new theme by contrasting the white love of spectacle and the Indian love of participation; and, in one of the few statements that Wyndham Lewis could endorse, he seems to present the gulf between the two ways of consciousness as absolute. They are "fatal" to each other, "not ever to be reconciled. There is no bridge, no canal of connection." But, having experienced meeting in Oaxaca, we may suspect that the full acceptance of this limit will open a hitherto unseen door. And in fact Lawrence now says that such acceptance is "the first step to a new accomplishment": you may then "have a little Ghost inside you which sees both ways." This paradox results from Lawrence's vigorous presentation of unity-in-difference. His world-view is neither monistic nor dualistic; it is one of polarity or "non-duality." The twilight spark of contact, between races or within the self, does not reduce day and night to a common essence. In *Twilight in Italy* (a book whose title can be fully explained only in the context of this symbolism) Lawrence had said that the "Holy Ghost" within may reconcile the "Two Ways," there projected upon Northern and Southern Europe. And in *The Plumed Serpent* that Ghost appears to Ramon, "lord of both ways," as the evening or morning star. But Kate Leslie must endure antagonism and vacillation before the Ghost can be born in her; and here again Lawrence wishes to prevent a hasty and sentimental reduction of the "other" to "our own terms," of the unconscious night-world to the terms of the ego's day-world. The usual charge that his Indians are not "other" but quite Lawrentian misses this latter distinction. In all his work the "positively" Lawrentian results from the attempt to assimilate unconscious material. His ego, as he knew, was refracted in a very different range of characters, from the effeminate and priggish Cyril Beardsley of *The White Peacock* to the haughty tourist of Huayapa and the yet more ominously willful Clifford Chatterley.

Because the ego must abandon its own view in order to approach the "other," in "Indians and Entertainment" the sympathy with the

Indian way of consciousness gradually increases until the last sentence, describing a racing youth who has driven himself "into the heart of the fire," shifts the point of view: "And he walks away at last, his chest lifting and falling heavily, a strange look in his eyes, having run with the changeless god who will give us nothing unless we overtake him." That "us" and "we" seem to bridge the gulf. But Lawrence does not try to belong to both ways of consciousness. Agreeing with the Indian that the "mind is there merely as a servant, to keep a man pure and true to the mystery," he must nevertheless, as a European, use his mind differently to attain that end. "Imaginatively, we have to know all: even the elemental waters," he said in his essay on Dana. "And know and know on, until knowledge suddenly shrivels and we know that forever we don't know." *Mornings in Mexico* is itself spectacle—"pictorial, conceptual," self-conscious and sardonic; and it merely invites us to accept also the realm of unconscious participation, where we meet other creatures and the "invisible sun of our own being." So this essay leads us down toward the "generic experiences" of the "great blood-stream," rendered in Indian song, and toward the "great central source" of rest and renewal, sought in the treading of the round dance. But even Lawrence's Indians knew that "the heart like a planet pulsating in an orbit, keeps up the strange, lonely circulating of the separate human existence." We are asked to experience, like the Indian *walking away* from his race but with fuller consciousness, the living tension between individuality and cosmic unity.

"Dance of the Sprouting Corn" takes us a step closer to that awareness. All expository distance has vanished; the point of view is that of immediate apprehension. After we approach Santo Domingo, the prose gradually builds to an incantatory climax that enacts, like the dance itself, the union of the many and the one in an eternal moment. The "deep rhythmic absorption" of the dancing men "still leaves them awake and aware"—and:

Down, down, down they drop, on the heavy, ceaseless leap of the dance, and the great necklaces of shell-cores spring on the naked breasts, the neck-shell flaps up and down, the short white kilt of woven stuff, with the heavy woollen embroidery, green and red and black, opens and shuts slightly to the strong lifting of the knees: the heavy whitish cords that hang from the kilt-band at the side sway and coil forever down the side of the right leg, down to the ankle, the bells on the red-woven

garters under the knees ripple without end, and the feet, in buckskin boots furred round the ankle with a beautiful band of skunk fur, black with a white tip, come down with a lovely, heavy, soft precision, first one, then the other, dropping always plumb to earth.

Only at the end does Lawrence comment on the "germination" or "resurrection" that results from the meeting within the seed of forces "from the heights and from the depths." Like the grain of corn, man himself is a "seed" in that realm where the above meets the below. Furthermore, as a "caller" and "knower," he may command the macrocosmic influences. However, lest the Indian or Lawrentian emphasis on white magic should mislead, the final sentences make clear that man's true end as "master" is not domination but participation or communion: "He partakes in the springing of the corn, in the rising and budding and earing of the corn. And when he eats his bread at last, he recovers all he once sent forth, and partakes again of the energies he called to the corn, from out of the wide universe."

Comparing the next essay, "The Hopi Snake Dance," with Lawrence's earlier satirical sketch of that dance in *The Laughing Horse*, Aldington has concluded that it was "probably written to placate the wounded vanity of his American friends who wanted their Indians to be admired." But the two versions illustrate again Lawrence's own repeated movement from jeering toward religious apprehension. In fact, he wrote Owen Brewster that this was one of his favorite essays in *Mornings in Mexico*; and its theme, the reconciliation with the Cosmic Dragon, forms the climax of the book. The immediacy of the previous essay has yielded to a multiple perspective that prepares for the return to our own world. As a circus for tourists, the dance is cheap; as aesthetic spectacle, it has none of the beauty of the corn dance; as religion, it requires "some spark of understanding" of the animism implied. Presenting that understanding, Lawrence repeatedly suggests the "little Ghost" that sees both ways. He ironically compares our scientific conquest of the cosmos with the Indian conquest through the "living will." "To each sort of man his own achievement"—and his own limitation. Though our corn doesn't fail, "the other thing fails us, the strange inward sun of life. . . . A subtle dragon stings us in the midst of plenty."

But "conquest" is again too simple. To use Erich Fromm's distinction, the Indian's power is less "domination" than "potency." He would "get himself into relation," Lawrence says, with that Dragon

or Sun, that Plumed Serpent, which is the source of life. In the dance the snakes seem "strangely gentle, naive, wondering and almost willing, almost in harmony with the men." To make them so is the "sacred aim." For the Hopi "the most terrible dragon is still somewhat gentle-hearted," and the dances enact the strange meeting with that Dragon, that "original One" which "pulses its willingness and its unwillingness that we should live and move on, from being to being, manhood to further manhood." We must submit to the beneficence of the Source that "enters us from behind" and must conquer its malevolence. But we must conquer through reverent acceptance, as in the ritual spitting which is "a kind of blessing, a communion, a sort of embrace." Lawrence had sketched that acceptance of the serpent of the unconscious seven years earlier in the semi-occult terms of "The Reality of Peace." It glimmers as a violated obligation in the symbolic drama of his fine poem "The Snake." And it is achieved momentarily by Kate Leslie in *The Plumed Serpent* when she feels "a certain reconciliation" between herself and the snake, between herself and "all the unseen things in the hidden places of the earth."

After the snake dance Lawrence insists again upon the "gulf of mutual negations." The Indians "can't see as we see"; ours "was the quickest way, so we are conquerors for the moment." But that satirical "we" cannot fully describe one who has really made this literary journey, who has accepted the "otherness" glimpsed in Indian, serpent, or the depths of himself. He is partly superseded by a new self born of the meeting of two realms. To claim that self as "his," of course, would be to reinstall the old ego in its hard supremacy. That is why "A Little Moonshine with Lemon" closes the year with a lightly nostalgic and ironic reverie that merely hints at this resolution. Lawrence has returned to Italy, but he has really passed "onward."

"Ye Gods, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus . . . !"

As epigraph for this essay, Cassius' bitter comment upon Caesar becomes Lawrence's half-humorous reflection upon himself. Far from really possessing the little Ghost that bestrides the gulf of mutual negations, he is possessed by it, puzzled by it:

Sono io! say the Italians. I am I! Which sounds simpler
than it is.

Because which I am I, after all, now that I have drunk a

glass also to St. Catherine, and the moon shines over the sea, and my thoughts, just because they are fleetingly occupied by the moon on the Mediterranean, and ringing with the last farewell: *Dunque, Signore! di nuovo!*—must needs follow the moon-track south-west, to the great South-west, where the ranch is.

That sense of double identity and double location fuses the youth of the Mediterranean and of Italy ("so reputedly old, yet forever so child-like and naive") with the "wonderful, hoary age of America, the continent of the afterwards." The psychological meaning of that America—the ancient depths that have been assimilated—now appears in the vision of the New Mexico ranch on a winter night: "the horses are gone away, and it is snow, and the moon shines on the alfalfa slope, between the pines, and the cabins are blind. There is nobody there. Only the big pine tree in front of the house, standing still and unconcerned, alive." That column of life persists in the absence of all "conscious" activity; and that moon is the American moon which had disturbed Kate Leslie before her reconciliation with the serpent. The "moonshine in America," she had said, "doesn't make one feel glad as it does in Europe. One feels it would like to hurt one." But for a Lawrentian tourist who has passed onward, it "blazes wolf-life, as here it never blazes; risen like a were-wolf over the mountains." He is now open to such astral influences, and indeed to all the presences of the "under-air"—as Lawrence the writer had often been, in Califano, in Cornwall. There are the "circling mountains" ("you see them even if you don't see them"), the stars that "snap like distant coyotes," and the pine trees making "little noises, sudden and stealthy, as if they were walking about." And it is the "ghosts" of the mountains, no longer a distant vitality but "nearer than the blood," which he misses most.

They reproach him for "going away," but, like the Indian walking away from the heart of the fire, he has not simply departed. He now has something of the lunar were-wolf, the changeling, and even in Europe he feels these ghosts as semi-immediate presences. That is why the "moonshine" undergoes yet other permutations. It is the drink he would have at the ranch before darting to bed with the ghosts cosily round him. Toward morning, waking with the cold, he would see the pine tree "like a person on guard, and a low star just coming over the mountain, very brilliant, like someone swinging an electric lantern." And that light-bearer or Lucifer—that spark of contact or

germinating seed between day and night, conscious and unconscious, Europe and America—is itself whimsically rendered in the closing thought, which fuses the two realms by the simple device of a literal translation: “Supposing I called Giovanni, and told him I wanted: ‘*Un poco di chiar’ di luna, con cannella e limone. . .*’”

4

This essay of November 25 suggests, beyond the dramatic frame of *Mornings in Mexico*, another Christmas—for life is a series of rebirths, “from being to being, manhood to further manhood.” But we glimpse little of the future: like the Hopi, Lawrence saw the “shimmer of creation” rather than the “finality of the created,” and the book’s main character is “lost again” in the “open.” We know, however, that the writer moved toward other centres of meeting (modern England, ancient Etruria, the Eastern Mediterranean of fable) as he pursued the life-long task of annihilating the ego or selfhood and redeeming the emanation.

That is the task which Blake had described in *Milton and Jerusalem* and had epitomized in “Morning”:

To find the Western path
Right thro’ the Gates of Wrath
I urge my way;
Sweet mercy leads me on:
With soft repentant moan
I see the break of day.

In fact, despite some important differences, there is a clear symbolic continuity from Jacob Boehme’s *Aurora* to Blake’s “Morning” and on to Lawrence’s *Mornings in Mexico*. Boehme held that we must courageously pass from this fallen world or “House of Wrath” through the “Gates of Hell”—through that “Wrath of God” which is a reflex of our *own* wrath and which “bolts up the Firmament”—into the paradisaical state made possible when the ego’s Fire accepts its own annihilation and is reborn as Light. “Thou wilt be strong, and wilt break through the gate of the deep as the morning star, and though thou liest captive here in the night yet the rays of the dawn will appear to thee in paradise. . .” For Blake too the closed-in universe results from a fall into a wrathful selfhood—a fall which closes the Western Gate, shuts out inspiration, and represses and perverts the innocently physical or sexual. “Albion clos’d the Western

Gate, & shut America out by the Atlantic for a curse, and hidden horror, and an altar of victims to Sin and Repentance." Occasionally we may glimpse that now largely unconscious realm—"America clos'd out by the Oaks of the western shore, / And Tharmas dash'd on the Rocks of the Altars of Victims in Mexico." But if we journey westward—if we open the closed and self-sufficient ego—then the repressed, perverted, and projected emanation may be met, redeemed, and assimilated. A "hidden horror" or violent Mexico may become once more a paradisaical America. And such is the psychological and symbolical movement of Lawrence's tourist.

Mornings in Mexico, of course, does not present all the difficulty and danger of that western path as Lawrence knew it. Absent is the terrible slowness of the journey, experienced by Lou Witt of *St. Mawr* as by Kate Leslie. Absent is the drowning of the hasty ego in the released forces of the unconscious, dramatized in *The Woman Who Rode Away*. Largely absent too is the perversion which occurs when the ego's acceptance of a universe of power becomes a self-deceiving assertion of power—when "potency" becomes "domination." That perversion is apparent as early as 1915 in Lawrence's correspondence with Bertrand Russell, where he tries to combine a Blakean morality of passionate "impulse" with monarchic rule, and it is dramatized half-comprehendingly in *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*. In *Mornings in Mexico* only such things as the stress upon "conquest" and the defense of Apache cruelty suggest that Lawrence could not sustain his best insights, that he would sometimes (like Blake's benevolent but terribly mistaken Urizen) use and thus perpetuate the Wrath of this world instead of voyaging through the Gates.

Clearly the western path is more difficult in life than in literature—a fact which may partly explain the torturing vacillation and soul-splitting that Lawrence endured increasingly from 1914 to 1926. It may be significant that Kenneth Rexroth's brilliant but too generous introduction to the *Selected Poems*, which approvingly notes Lawrence's relation to Blake, Jung, and the gnostic tradition, scants the problems of that period; for Lawrence's temptations (his domination, his mistakenly *willed* transformations) are chronic in gnosticism both ancient and modern. Yet those temptations may themselves form part of a larger acceptance. By following Boehme's or Blake's circle of destiny to its nadir, Lawrence may have completed the most difficult part of his western path. Whatever Cipriano or the Chilchui Indians are doing, Lawrence was accepting their existence as portions of him-

self. He wielded no sacrificial knife and yielded to none; he wrote the stories. The literary enactment of those temptations—"giving," in Blake's words, "a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off forever"—may have enabled the relaxation that sweeps over the works begun in late 1926 and in 1927, the first *Lady Chatterley*, *Etruscan Places*, and *The Man Who Died*. In them a gentler Birkin reaffirms the nonchalance, patience, reverence, and love which he sees in the delicately burgeoning forces of nature, and which Blake saw in the Divine Vision.

But *Mornings in Mexico* already sketches the total acceptance which restores the original unity of consciousness, joins that consciousness with the whole of life, and so takes away the occasion of violence. As Lawrence said in his piece on a very Blakean psychologist, Trigant Burrow, "What must be broken is the egocentric absolute of the individual." The pitfalls of his career (including the failures of conception and tone that mar the more ambitious third version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) but demonstrate the continual possibility of using even that acceptance to further the ego's aggressions. And if as a man he never quite stepped free (as Rexroth sees him do after his marriage), if he never fully entered Blake's morning, that too has its compensations. A free Lawrence would have lapsed into silence. He would have entered the realm of pure meeting which he glimpsed so often:

The youth walks up to the white horse, to put its halter on
and the horse looks at him in silence.
They are so silent they are in another world.

"Billy Budd": *The Nightmare of History*

The question of *Billy Budd* is the question of historical authority and justice. Only in this view does the novel possess a unity of form, for then each digression from the central action mediates the moral significance of the hero's fate. The total structure thus can be reduced to a design of interacting perspectives, the logic of which determines the way Melville says what he has to say. But even though the artist is the ultimate architect of this house of fiction, he assigns its building to a first-person narrator. And since this surrogate re-creates the past in order to illuminate the present, he is, in the literal sense, an historian.

Melville's preface to the novel establishes this outlook. It proposes an examination of the consequences of the nineteenth-century belief in historical determinism:

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which *as every thinker now feels*, involved a crisis for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age, involved the rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. . . . [d]uring those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what *to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be*, a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.¹

This rubric advises the reader that the fictional action is to be framed in the philosophy of the French Revolution. By extension, then, the narrator becomes the spokesman for this vision of human destiny with

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¹ *Billy Budd* in *Selected Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Jay Leyda (New York, 1952), p. 805 (italics mine). All parenthetical page references hereafter are to this edition.

its basic assumption that man can make history.² Ironically, this faith in man's ability to direct the course of civilization towards preordained secular goals undermines the basis of religious redemption. The linear timetable of Christian salvation (as it moves from the Fall to the Resurrection and finally to the Day of Judgment, when time ends with the establishment of the eternal city of New Jerusalem) is subverted. History usurps the role of the church. Man unwittingly estranges himself from the vital moral tradition that hitherto gave his life meaning and purpose. Melville, I think, takes note of this spiritual dilemma in his cryptic reference to "a crisis for Christendom." In any event, his alter ego in the novel gives expression to this awareness. For when he sets out to resolve the enigma of Billy Budd's fate in the light of this current philosophy of history, he fully realizes that the effort will culminate in ludicrous confusion. Hence in order to reveal his knowledge of what the real issue is, he invariably counterpoints his mock-serious recapitulation of events with ironic allusions to the redemptive pattern of Christianity. In effect, the action is projected on two different levels of reality, the historical and the religious (or mythic).

The first chapter, in its varied perspectives, validates this critical approach to *Billy Budd*. Beginning with an historical reminiscence (a form of interpolation, supposition, and speculation), the narrator alternates this presentation with a report of immediate action. As the two strands of narration interweave, it becomes evident that the notion of history itself threatens the destruction of Christian civilization. Viewed traditionally, his correlation of the mythic figure of "the Handsome Sailor" with the hierophantic icons of Aldebaran, Taurus, "the grand sculptured Bull" of ancient Assyria, and the biblical Ham attests the continuity of a universal belief in divine redemption. But, conversely, his accompanying reference to the course of recent events suggests that this faith has been reduced to an outmoded superstition. This is clearly implied when he connects the notorious Anacharis Cloots, an

² It is almost a truism that, from the seventeenth century on, history ceases to be a manifestation of the will of God (that is, a recurring theophany of love and anger). No longer does the belief prevail that Christ died in order to redeem the dislocations of time. Instead events begin to have value in and for themselves, as concrete evidence of progress towards finite perfection. This doctrine was proclaimed by Leibniz in the eighteenth century, and with the triumph of evolutionary ideas in the next century it developed into a social and political gospel (Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* [New York, 1954], p. 145).

avowed enemy of Christ and all religions, with the conduct "of the first French Assembly" (808). This revolutionary tribunal based its Declaration of the Rights of Man upon a repudiation of all transcendental religious authority. The implications of this legislation are dramatized in the adoption of the Republican Calendar which, in eliminating Sunday as one of the days of the week, denied any importance to Christianity in the development of modern culture. And so Melville more accurately defines "the Spirit of that Age" alluded to in the preface: it is the spirit of atheism.

This level of reference controls the narrator's treatment of Billy's impressment, and it materializes in a sequence of witty equivoques. The sailor, for instance, is forced to renounce his allegiance to "the old *Rights of Man*" (813). Here the qualifying "old" distinguishes the rights on the vessel from those of the revolutionary declaration. For under the influence of the hero, who is constantly referred to in colloquial epithets adapted from conventional attributes of Christ, "the jewel of 'em," "the flower of the flock," and "peacemaker," behavior on the ship owned by a radical Scot, an admirer of such famous debunkers of religious authority as "Voltaire [and] Diderot" (812-13), is nonetheless tempered by the practice of Christian love. Billy converts "a rat-pit of quarrels" into a tranquil fellowship, exercising the prerogatives of "a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy." This role, however, is subverted by his transfer to the *Indomitable*. Lieutenant Ratcliffe, who enforces the impressment, is the agent of a new code of the Rights of Man, the content of which is symbolized in the toast of grog drunk to celebrate the addition to the crew: "'Well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting peacemakers'" (811-12). This blasphemous parody of the Sermon on the Mount is by extension a mock Eucharistic gesture, a denial of the law of love. This reversal of Billy's intuitive loyalty to divine justice and authority is illuminated in a climactic pun; when he "enter[s] the King's Service," that of a secular monarch, he is compelled to abandon his allegiance to the true King (809).

Adjudged as artifice, this method of narration is comic in tone. For the voice which addresses the reader is at once pompous and ironical, pedantic and subtle, moralistic and skeptical. In effect, its deliberate ambiguity is irresistibly tempting; while seeming to promise endless revelations it only piques curiosity, the verbal strategy of a trickster. On the one hand the narrator blandly argues that the events of history are the key to a total understanding of fate; on the other he insists

that the enigma of human destiny is embodied in the redeemer tradition of myth. Both arguments, as he formulates them, are specious. The French Revolution offers no concrete proof of historical determinism.⁸ And if the hero is a contemporary manifestation of a savior, then he is unacceptable to his culture, at least if the *Indomitable* is taken as a microcosm of a perverted Christian world. His role has been arrogated by secular and military authority. Thus with both lines of imagery converging upon the affirmation of an untenable conception of human salvation, it would seem that Melville intends *Billy Budd* to be read as pure mummery—a mock Christ in quest of a sacrificial function in a society that is preoccupied with the idea of a redeemer as an emotional sentiment, not a spiritual force—Vere's evaluation of Billy.

The second chapter continues the ambiguous characterization of the hero. The narrator at first encourages the belief that Billy's role aboard the "old *Rights-of-Man*" has been undermined in his transfer to the warship: "hardly here was he that cynosure he had previously been . . . [in] the merchant marine." The corruption of his function is patently defined in the conversion of his beauty into homosexual attraction: "as the *handsome sailor* Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the high-born dames of the court. But the change in circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue-jackets" (815). Yet, even as one begins to nibble meditatively on the substance of these remarks, the trickster-narrator withdraws the invitation, deliberately confuting this hideously worldly description of the hero. Alternating reports of the past and the present, he relates Billy's appearance to "something suggestive of a mother eminently favored by Love and the Graces; all this strangely indicat[ing] a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot." Moreover, he is rumored to have been abandoned and "found in a pretty silk-lined basket." Whether or not the first allusion is a cryptic reference to the Virgin Mary, the royal ancestry and the motif of desertion (persecution and flight in the Christian variation on the theme of the lost and found) establish Billy in the line of the saviors of myth. And further affirma-

⁸The two poems that Melville was revising at the same time he was writing *Billy Budd*, "At a Hostelery" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba," testify to his disillusionment with any such theory of history.

tion of this intention seems harbored in the answer he gives in regard to his parentage: "'God knows, Sir'" (816).

A moment later, however, this approach to an understanding of the hero's role in the action is abandoned and another one implemented. And the process goes on endlessly. Therefore it seems pointless to quote the details of these contradictory interpolations; they sustain the strategy of this chapter—and every other chapter in the novel. Obviously they have a purpose. But what? They characterize, I think, a method of *reductio ad absurdum*, a narrative interpretation of reality that is designed to reveal the intellectual and moral confusion of the nineteenth-century mind, specifically its vacuously optimistic conception of the destiny of man.

In any event, Chapter III is devoted to an examination of the nature of the ludicrous self-deception upon which the age founds its belief in temporal salvation. Recapitulating the historical incidents that led up to the incident on the *Indomitable*, the shifty narrator begins to weave into his commentary all the intimation of the preface to the novel. He refers to the crucial date of "1797," to the "conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory," and to "a crisis . . . the Kingdom might have anticipated." In the light of atheistic tendencies of the revolutionary leaders, it would seem here that the "proselyting" is undermining faith in the Kingdom of Heaven. This association, certainly, is an inevitable corollary of Billy's degradation on the warship. Yet even though Melville's alter ego knows that a moral exigency is impending for humanity, he ironically exalts those men whose values reflect the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual disorientation of the times. For instance, he quotes the chauvinistic ballad-writer Dibdin, who sentimentally and fatuously argues that man owes his complete loyalty to the secular authority and to the ruthless justice that quelled the Great Mutiny: "'And as for my life, 'tis the King's!'" Melville's italics and the capitalization of "King's" are, I think, rubrics which call attention to the corruption of the image of God in the public mind and to the emergence of "law and freedom" defined by force (819-20).

This defection from the traditional ideals of human dignity is also connected with the historians of the rebellion. Likewise pandering to secular authority, they prudently neglect to report the sordid aspects of England's naval triumphs: "Such events cannot be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous

in his family; a nation in the like circumstances may without reproach be equally discreet" (820). This rationalization of objective truth is, no doubt, a clue to the role that Melville's historian is enacting. Like his counterparts in the world of reality, he is not averse to betraying the trust of his gullible readers, though of course for the purpose of mocking their self-satisfaction.

And it is with this thought in mind that one must approach his digression on Nelson's military exploits. Not only is the religious imagery associated with the exposition a profanation of the guiding principles of Christianity, but the facts are deliberately distorted. Even though he admits at one point that the mutinous crew fought under intimidation, in front of officers "stand[ing] with drawn swords" (825), he nevertheless illogically proceeds to extol the outcome: "thousands of mutineers . . . helped to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile, and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar. To the mutineers those battles and especially Trafalgar were a plenary absolution; and a grand one; for all that goes to make up scenic naval display and heroic magnificence in arms, those battles stand unmatched in human annals" (821). These affected sentiments are, I think, concrete evidence of the narrator's method of *reductio ad absurdum*. Indeed, it would be difficult to establish any other function for them.

The same intention is clearly manifested in the subsequent re-creation of Nelson's ceremonial preparation for a heroic death. For once again the juxtaposition of hallowed religious imagery with martial splendor disvalues the apparent tribute: "At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of the opening fight sat down and wrote his last will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jeweled vouchers of his own shining deeds . . . [and] thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice" (824). This self-pretension, glibly passed off by the narrator as a virtuous but "excessive love of glory" (823), is an outrageous burlesque of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It marks the attempt of man to transform the sacred ritual of Christianity into the vehicle of historical vainglory.

In the next chapter Melville's *ieron* painstakingly chisels out a profile of Captain Vere; at least this appears to be the intention. A kind of biographical retrospect, the endeavor at first glance reflects no satirical purpose. But even as Nelson's historionics betray the moral disorder of contemporary Christianity (a subtle extension of the influence of

the French Revolution), so also do the secret motivations of the *Indomitable's* commander. In both instances the exacting demands of historical necessity take precedence over spiritual values.

The narrator, of course, does not convey this impression directly. With his usual duplicity, he encourages the reader to admire the Captain. The latter, he engagingly recounts, is "thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so." (Is this a *non sequitur*?) Moreover, he is always "mindful of the welfare of his men" (as in the case of Billy Budd). Such observations blandly flow on, and one is apt to overlook the disturbing insinuations that punctuate the measured praise. This "most undemonstrative of men," for instance, has "little appreciation of mere humor," and he "never tolerat[es] an infraction of discipline." And on occasions he "show[s] more or less irascibility" but instantly "controls it." In fine, he is a martinet whose calm, official exterior conceals a malignant egoism. But even while the narrator calls attention to this fact, he pretends to ignore it. Or rather he leaves the judgment of Vere's "exceptional character" up to the sensibility of the reader. And such is the challenge of the descriptive passage that follows:

He had a marked leaning toward everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome, falling at intervals to commanders even during a war-cruise, never was tedious for Captain Vere. With nothing of *that literary taste which less beeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle*, his bias toward those books to which *every serious mind of superior order* occupying *any active post of authority* in the world naturally inclines; books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era—history, biography and unconventional writers. (826-28, italics mine)

Are these the interests of a discerning, sensitive mind? Are history and biography the vehicles of the deepest truths about the human condition? I think not. Vere's conception of ultimate reality is directly linked to the delusions fostered by the French Revolution in regard to man's ability to make history or, to put it in terms of the Captain's ambitions, to achieve "the fullness of fame" in time (900).

The narrator's further delineation establishes the irony underlying his professed esteem for Vere. As he points out, the kind of reading

in question can warp intellectual integrity: "In this love of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics . . . which he forefelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired." By extension, these attitudes subordinate emotional and moral values to expediency. The salvation of man, "the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind," no longer depends upon Christianity; according to Vere, history operates to define the basic patterns of human experience: "in illustrating any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time he would . . . cite some historic character or incident of antiquity"; and "considerateness in such matters [was] not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's" (827-29). In so reducing the conduct of the affairs of life to mechanical precedents, he dissociates human nature from instinct and spontaneity, thereby surrendering the dignity of man to the atheistic and deterministic illusions of the *Zeitgeist*.

As opposed to the blatant irony of Vere's characterization, the multiple perspective on Claggart is deviously contrived. As the narrator in mock humility confesses, "This portrait I essay, but shall never hit it" (829). Here he speaks like a typical nineteenth-century man who is spiritually rootless, without any resources of metaphysical or ethical valuation, without a sustaining myth to bring order and intelligibility to the moral vagaries of existence. And this he openly admits: "my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And, indeed, if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men. As it is, *one must turn to some authority not liable to the charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element*" (841-42, italics mine). Under these circumstances, confronted by what appears to be an insoluble problem of evil, he undertakes a resolution in terms of the muddled and bemused conscience of his age. His first approach to an understanding of Claggart's corruption depends upon an absurd combination of historical fact and pseudo-science:

The face was a notable one; the features all except the chin cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion; yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the prints of the Rev. Dr. Oates, the historical deponent with the clerical drawl in the

time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; silken jet curls partly clustered over it, making a foil to the pallor below, . . . This complexion . . . seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution of the blood. (830)

It is, I think, difficult to find anything relevant to the issue of Claggart's unique moral nature in the sequence of facial analogies. And as to the meticulous description of the latter's physical appearance, it suggests a deplorable familiarity with the worst features of the archaic Gothic novel. In a later development of the implications of these external traits, one is almost certain that the sinister Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* is grimacing behind Claggart's pallid countenance: "But upon any abrupt or unforeseen encounter a red light would flash forth from his eyes like a spark from an anvil in a dusky smithy. The fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were a color nearest approaching violet" (856). But then—so what! This is all finical tomfoolery.

At least so the narrator's next digression seems to prove, a half-hearted philosophical speculation: "In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: 'Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature.' A definition which though savoring of Calvinism, by no means involves Calvin's dogma as to total mankind. *Evidently* its intent makes it applicable but to individuals" (italics mine). Here his argument is invalidated by an apocryphal text and a Christian interpolation of Plato, even if one is willing to accept the logic of his final assumption. However, he himself almost immediately disclaims any such accomplishment, for he decides that this "question of moral responsibility" is best handled by "clerical proficients." Yet even though he confesses the futility of his interminable casuistry, he nevertheless defends his undertaking: "The point of the present story turning on the hidden nature of the master-at-arms has necessitated this chapter. [And] the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate as it may, its own credibility" (842-44). It would seem that here he admits that the present phase of narration has no organic connection with what follows.

And he means what he says, no doubt, for this is the method of the traditional trickster. Since there is no respect for sense in the society

whose mask he wears, he is under no obligation to explain his contradictions. This attitude is also in evidence a moment later. While earlier he unctuously apologizes for not invoking the authority of the Bible in establishing his conception of Claggart's evil nature (the "savor of Holy Writ . . . was far from being intended[,] for little will it commend these pages to many a reader of today"), he now sees fit to quote the Old Testament in order to prove, of all things, that Claggart's animus towards the sailor "was no vulgar form of passion." That is, unlike the example he chooses, it was not a manifestation of repressed homosexuality: "Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd, did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy that married Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely David." But having dropped this profane, pre-Freudian insinuation into the kettle of confusion, he quickly discards the idea in favor of another approach to the riddle of Claggart's hatred for Billy, a consideration of a petty infraction of discipline: "And the circumstances that provoke it, however trivial or mean, are no measure of its power. In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun-deck, and one of the external provocations a man-of-war's spilled soup" (844-46). And like spilled soup, his arguments run willy-nilly through the cracks of his ironically puckered lips. But his *conscious* manipulation of the principles of *reductio ad absurdum* is inherent in the theme of the novel. Mocking the metaphysical poverty of nineteenth-century man, who, without a frame of transcendental reference, was lost in the domain of moral speculation, he demonstrates that under this condition it is impossible to bring order and coherence into the dislocations of human experience. This predicament, of course, is the direct outcome of the current infatuation with the idea of historical determinism.

Contingent circumstance, Billy's accidental slaying of Claggart, puts the philosophy of historical determinism on public trial for the reader (here is the dramatic enactment of the symbolic underthought of the preceding narration). As I believe I have established, Vere is the representative custodian of its values: he exalts its authority, he respects its justice, and he sympathizes with its secular goals. Hence when he allows these articles of conviction to govern his conduct of the court-martial, he renounces allegiance in the sustaining moral traditions of Western culture. Therefore in the re-creation of the trial and its aftermath, the narrator deliberately emphasizes the *disjecta membra* of these religious beliefs, mockingly invoking parallels to the sacrifice of Christ which no longer affects the human soul.

This irony pervades Claggart's interview with the Captain, and is a later modulation of Ratcliffe's travesty of Billy's (and Christ's) redemptive role in the opening pages of the novel. Listening to the accusation of treason against the seamen, Vere recalls that he had been thinking of promoting him to "the captaincy of the mizzen-top." In the immediate context of the action this phrase is related to the statement, "Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the time was called a 'King's Bargain'"; and quite obviously the correlation is symbolic. The mast is a conventional icon of the cross on the dominical ship of salvation, and the bargain is the colloquial equivalent of the atonement insured by the crucifixion. This explication is substantiated a moment later by an analogy that figures the sailor as "young Joseph" betrayed by his brothers (863-64), for in the familiar typology of the Bible this perfidy anticipates the treachery of Judas and, in the plot of *Billy Budd*, of Vere.

Structurally, this pattern of imagery dictates the narrator's handling of the murder episode, for a startling reversal of reader-expectation occurs. In his description of the seaman's reaction to the charge of treason (his "expression . . . was as a crucifixion to behold"), he invites the kind of commiseration that belongs to a rehearsal of the agony on Golgotha. And such appears to be the response of Vere when suddenly Billy's blow sends Claggart crashing to his death on the deck: "'Fated boy!'" For with the Captain's impulsive cry, "'It is the divine judgment on Ananias,'" there seems little reason to doubt the integrity of his moral convictions. But if this is so, it is a matter of the heart and not of the head, a temporary relapse of emotion. Only in this way can one explain his vehement announcement: "'Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang.'" For here Vere exhibits his intellectual contempt for the Christian ethic. Though the trial has not yet been held, he has already vowed that the sailor must die. Like an automaton, he cedes the administration to the impersonal authority of a court-martial which is hardly actuated in its procedures by any of the spiritual awareness implicit in his verbal outbursts: "'Go now,' said Captain Vere *with something of his wonted manner*, 'Go now. I shall presently call a drumhead court'" (868-70, italics mine).

The full import of Vere's inhuman legalism is revealed in the narrator's pretense of objectivity in his interpolation ("What he said was to this effect") of Vere's trial instructions. Instead he blatantly

calls attention to the officer's outrageous perversion of Christian love, to the disavowal of moral justice:

If, mindless of palliating circumstances we are bound to regard the death of the Master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sigh sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest our allegiance is to Nature? *No, to the King.* Though the ocean is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regard ceased to be free agents. (879-80, italics mine)

This argument, of course, is the epitome of *reductio ad absurdum*, so ludicrous in its reasoning that one cannot discount the grimacing trickster who authors it. He has pulled off his mask and has dared the reader to think (is twentieth-century man as morally callous as Melville believed his contemporaries to be?). Can the individual renounce free will and still aspire for spiritual dignity—that is, after he has delegated to a temporal king a control over predestination that in his own day has been denied to God? In terms of Jonathan Edwards' famous essay, the question can be answered in the affirmative; but, when coupled with the qualification, even his logic is inadequate (and, no doubt, Melville has Edwards in mind at this point). Unfortunately, as the narrator would apparently have it, Vere is not aware of his contradictions. His facile references to divine and natural rights are counterfeit sentiments of self-deception, vestiges of a dead faith whose authority has been usurped by historical events which, in this novel, are the forces of political determinism. The allusion to the omnipotent king in this context simply extends Billy Budd's equivocal savior role, a function which he affirms at the end of the trial: "Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says, but it is not true as the Master-at-Arms said. I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King'" (875). In effect, the obvious Eucharistic imagery underscores Vere's repudiation of the Christian law of redemptive love.

The aftermath of the trial provides the narrator with another opportunity to deride Vere's custodianship of moral truth and justice. As in his burlesque of the argument against free will, he resorts to the type of casuistry that, as a vehicle of truth, is an insult to anyone who pretends to have intelligence: "Beyond the communication of the sentence what took place at the interview was never known. But in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that stateroom, each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of our nature—so rare indeed as to be all but incredible to average minds, however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured." To swallow this sentimental bait without protest is to be befooled, for so the knowing fool fools the unknowing fool. And this is the basic premise that operates in his biblical parallel to the meeting:

The austere devotee of military duty letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity may in the end have caught Billy to his heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest. But there is no telling the sacrament, seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world. . . . There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor, and holy oblivion the sequel to each diviner magnanimity . . . covers all at last. (884-85)

This turgid rhetoric recalls the narrator's similar treatment of Nelson's absurd sacrifice, but on this occasion the Abraham-Isaac analogy outwardly reveals his ridicule of the incident at issue. The patriarch's "exacting behest" originates with the divine King; Vere's determination to hang Billy is motivated by his subservience to historical necessity (and personal expedience). The sailor, then, is the scapegoat of man's belief in temporal perfection. The vision of linear time is substituted for the vision of resurrection in eternity.

The narrator rounds off this insidious subversion of evolutionary historicism in a chapter devoted exclusively to an explanation of his narrative method and its relation to the action. As I stated earlier, in the preface to the story he implies that the Spirit of the Age is atheistic in orientation; now he proceeds to prove it: "The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction can not so readily be achieved in narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narrative is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial." But the formlessness in question, a sequence of anti-

climactic incidents illustrating the godlessness of the French Revolution, is indispensable to his thematic argument; it enables him to substantiate his conviction that Christianity was corrupted by the new intellectual freedom. For example, he refers to the renaming (rechristening) of warships which expressed this outlook: "the *St. Louis* line-of-battle ship was named the *Athéiste*. Such a name, like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet while proclaiming *the infidel audacity of the ruling power was yet, though not so intended to be, the aptest name, if one consider it, ever given to a warship.*" Can he be more explicit? Does he not mean here that the "infidel audacity" prepared later generations to accept the substitution of historical for religious redemption, even as he indicates in the preface? If not, how else is one to interpret the fate of Vere? For the consequences of this defection from traditional moral values is symbolized in the death of the Captain of the profane dominical ship: the *Indomitable* which carries in its crew a debased incarnation of Christ. In his failure to allow the power of divine justice to rule his intellect, he dooms himself and his culture. His physical death merely records the death of the spiritual man: "On the return-passage to the English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded, the *Indomitable* fell in with the *Athéiste*. An engagement ensued; during which Captain Vere in the act of putting his ship alongside the enemy . . . was hit by a musket-ball from a port-hole of the enemy's main cabin." Fittingly, the narrator links the Captain's apostasy with his earthly aspirations for immortality, a direct reflection of the ridiculous pretensions of man infatuated with the permanence of historical deeds: "The spirit that spite its philosophic integrity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fullness of fame" (899-900, italics mine). The contrived symbolism of this incident, I think, suggests the secret of the "inside narrative" of the novel (the subtitle, 807). It binds together the fact and the fable of the story. It reduces history to an insubstantial drama in which man plays out the delusion of temporal transcendence. Thus the fact becomes the fable, the fable the fact. And so the narrator's quarrel with himself evolves into Melville's quarrel with the counterfeit God of the institutional church of his day.

Book Reviews

The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost by John F. Lynen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960. Pp. xii + 208. \$4.50.

The last book on Frost before this one told us explicitly that we must read the poet's heart before we can read his poems. It would seem to follow that, since the poet's heart has dwelt both in and on New England, we ought to know something of that subject too before we read the poems. But now Mr. Lynen tells us that the key that will unlock Frost's work for us consists in seeing it as a version of that least confessional and realistic, that most artful and even artificial of forms, the pastoral. Frost should be read neither as sage nor as realist, but as myth-maker. Like the rustic swains of pastoral tradition, Frost's New England can hardly be said to exist at all, or indeed ever to have existed. It is "not New England itself" but "a symbolic picture . . . a pastoral myth, a new version of Arcadia." The picture was created to serve as a meaningful contrast with urban complexity. Pastoralism is a technique of discovering meaning through this contrast.

Thus Mr. Lynen relieves us both of the embarrassment of having to try to be mind-readers, or rather heart-readers, and of the labor of trying to get to know something of the language and life of back-country New England—if we don't know the region first-hand. With New England as it appears in the poems reduced to an Arcadian myth, we can stop talking about life, Frost's and New England's, and turn to the poems themselves, which are by no means transparent and which have had all too little critical study.

Fine, we think. Frost's work is certainly art, not life, a complex symbolic structure, not an uncreative imitation or a mere statement of the opinions that comprise his much-admired wisdom. We find ourselves agreeing immediately with Mr. Lynen that we have had enough and more than enough studies of the man, and the man in relation to the region, and all too few helpful ones of the poems. Surely if Frost's work is to live on into the coming generations it will have to be intelligible and relevant to those who not only have never seen a meadow mowed with a scythe but don't know a scythe from a sickle—or a meadow from a pasture. Mr. Lynen must somehow be on the right track, we think.

He is, but he has overstated his case, especially in his early presentation of it. His own stance is too much determined by his reaction to the anecdotal historicism and impressionistic environmental studies that make up so much of the existing body of writing on Frost. His thesis, when trimmed down to the size it effectively has by the end of the book, that is, that the pastoral tradition has been a powerful influence on Frost's work and that some of his poems are best read as pastorals, is valid enough, and helpful, and fresh. The necessary concessions to aspects of the work to which the concept of pastoral is not relevant nearly all get made finally in passing, somewhere. But by then it is too

late. The quarrelsome marginal comments have already been scribbled, and the reader's confidence in Mr. Lynen's judgment has been too deeply shaken to be wholly revived. Here are some of my marginal objections. I should not bother to record them if the book had less value despite its defects, if it were not so clearly an understandably excessive reaction against an even less defensible position.

The "mythical" nature of Frost's New England. The life pictured in Frost's early poems may look mythical from the vantage point of New Haven in the fifties, but it was the life Frost knew and that may still, in part, be known in unprogressive, not yet either industrialized or deserted, places north of Boston. True, this life can and does inspire nostalgia and idealization in the forcibly urbanized: the pastoral motif. But Mr. Lynen seems to forget Frost's age, and the changes that have occurred in the last half century. What was history, and is in part still living history, becomes myth too easily and quickly in this treatment. Mr. Lynen tells us that Frost's New England cannot be taken to be the "real" New England (thus echoing, probably without intending to, Frost's negative critics in the twenties and thirties: escapism, lack of social relevance), since the real New England is urban and industrial and populated by non-Yankees. But to approach the question of the "reality" or "mythical" nature of Frost's New England from Mr. Lynen's strictly contemporary and urban point of view is, I think, to miss a part of the point. Frost records (of course that isn't *all* he does) a culture that once, at least, could be called "New England," and to some extent, in parts of the region, still can be. The suburbs of Boston and Hartford are just like the suburbs of New Jersey and Illinois, but Frost has not written about suburban life. Neither Rochester, Vermont, nor Wellesley, Massachusetts, is a "myth," but Rochester preserves much more of New England's past and so of its distinctive character. The forces of cultural homogenizing have not gone so far there. To know it is to find certain aspects of Frost's poetry less obscure.

The artful quality of Frost's work, the masks and poses. Of course, any artist is artful. He is not likely, in these days at least, to think of himself, nor are we likely to think of him, as simply recording: he creates. But let's not completely lose our historical sense. Frost began to write at the height of the realistic movement, which did not then seem naive, and the reigning ideal affected him and his work as it did Robinson and *his* work, and probably more profoundly. "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." Frost *meant* that. He meant it as man (his philosophy) and he meant it as artist (his aesthetic). We must not take it as simply dramatic, significant solely in context. Rather, it is a part of a credo that it is necessary to understand if one is fully to understand Frost's work. A *fact* in Frost's world is not something one just dreams up. It has to be solid, and experienced as solid, before it can become a symbol.

The universal, as contrasted with the regional, character of Frost's work. It is of course a sign of the greatness of Frost that his poetry at its best rises to the universal. But it does so not just in the way Mr. Lynen points out, by contrasting a simple pastoral world in which the relation between means and ends may be clearly seen with a confusing, and perhaps confused, urban world that is too much with us, but also by exploring the metaphorical implications of its

own world taken as complete, taken as *the* world. The New England Frost writes about is for him, and becomes for the sympathetic reader, a concrete universal, very concrete and therefore all the more universal. Not only the matter but the manner are recognizably regional, the tone, the attitudes, even at times the diction. (Mr. Lynen recognizes this aspect of Frost but attributes it to a deliberately adopted pose created to fit in with the Arcadian myth. I doubt it, but evidence on such a matter is not likely to be decisive. How much does Frost himself know about his own motives?) In all his poems, by no means just in the pastoral ones, Frost speaks as a New Englander. No dialect writer, he still uses not just a tone but even words that I find my students from other parts of the country, and especially from the large cities of other parts of the country, sometimes have trouble with. The reader who does not know what *town* still signifies north of Boston will misread some passages in Frost. (It does *not* mean "village" or "small city" or even "settlement"; some back-country towns have no settlements.) Not to know what *steplebush* means, what the lovely pest is, is to miss a part of the meaning of the volume that has that word as its title. Again, on a different level, Frost's affinity with Emerson, and even, less obviously, with Whittier and Emily Dickinson, are at least as significant as his ties with the pastoral tradition. Frost is a regional poet—which does not mean that he is naive or rustic.

As a result both of pushing his thesis too hard and of either not knowing about, or not thinking it important to pay attention to, the *life* Frost writes about, Mr. Lynen sometimes misreads the poems. His reading of "The Pasture" may serve as an example. We are told of this little poem Frost uses to introduce his collected volumes that "The contrast between the country and the town which we have noted in pastoral is clearly the essential element in the design of this poem." Not at all: not, at least, "clearly," and not "the essential element." Overjoyed at finding his pastoral design everywhere, even in a poem Frost seems to want us to find suggestive of the essential strategy and meaning of his work, and perhaps not having seen enough calves born or cleaned the leaves and muck out of enough springs, Mr. Lynen seizes upon a minor point and misses the major one. Not to indulge in a complete reading, which would have to be long, for the poem is very suggestive; there are two acts of "cleaning up" of nature in the poem, two acts that bring order out of mess or clarity out of murkiness. The poem expresses Frost's "humanism," his preference for "form" in poetry, his disdain for free verse, his rejection of any form of simple "naturalism." The essential contrast in the poem is not between city and country but between man and nature. Frost said long ago that he prefers his potatoes with the dirt washed off. The poem says something about Frost's conception of art and something about his conception of life.

One more general objection and I shall be through recording my marginal quarrels with Mr. Lynen. He writes as though he were younger than I thought it possible for a doctoral candidate to be, or to seem to be, even in a doctoral thesis, as this is. He seems always just to have discovered what has been known for quite a long time. Sometimes indeed he has not yet quite come to the point of discovering what has always been known: "He [Frost] is, in many respects, a pessimist and seems to believe that sorrow is an inevitable part of

human experience." Well. How is one to deal with a critic who can write such a sentence? If he has not yet discovered the inevitability of grief, sorrow—for the person human enough, sensitive enough, to be capable of it—then can he have felt the impact of the poems?

A general critical study of Frost's poetry has been needed, and still is. Yet, though this book does not fill that need, it has real value. Its thesis is valid when properly qualified, though it didn't need a whole book to make the point. Many of the readings of specific poems are good, a number of them in fact being the best I know of in print—"New Hampshire," "The Grindstone," "Fire and Ice," "The Code," "The Woodpile." Finally, when Mr. Lynen forgets his thesis and simply discusses Frost in general, he is usually sound. He is sympathetic without adulation, ready to take Frost seriously without setting him up as an infallible sage, predisposed to look for the artful within or behind the apparently simple or merely sincere. Frost is, I think, just as good an artist as Mr. Lynen argues, and just as "modern" in his themes; and Mr. Lynen is certainly right in distinguishing him from nineteenth century nature poets—though some of us at least have never been tempted to confuse him with them.

With all its defects, then, and some of them seem to me fairly serious, the book makes a significant contribution to Frost criticism. Perhaps the shortest way to express my very mixed reaction is to say that it is good enough to make me wish strongly that it were better. It is not the sort of book that just doesn't matter. It will have to be taken account of by Frostians.

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Theme and Structure in Swift's "Tale of a Tub" by Ronald Paulson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960. Pp. xiv + 259. \$4.50.

Smollett and the Scottish School by M. A. Goldberg. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1959. Pp. xiii + 191. \$3.00.

The roster of commentators and scholars of the works of Swift—from Justus Van Effen to Martin Price—although long, formidable and illustrious, is not yet exhausted. Add to it now Ronald Paulson, who provides a close reading of *A Tale of a Tub* to make clear what it is and what it means. Its basic structure, Mr. Paulson asserts, is "the juxtaposition of the real and the ideal, the world of men and the world of the imagination," and its general theme is "the conflict of illusion and reality." He reaches these conclusions by examination of Swift's satire as rhetorical and verbal art and by dissection of the teller of the *Tale*. He sees that the foundation of Swift's satire here is parody used to repudiate eccentricities in language and that the concomitant twisting and torturing of meaning exposes the poverty and confusion of thought in the "modern" world where excesses in pulpit eloquence, abuses in polemical writings and veneration of the ephemeral prevail. Swift's parodies lead to witless entanglement and hopeless bewilderment, permitting the receptive reader to recognize his ironic way of juxtaposing the real and the ideal.

The vehicle entrusted to carry this baggage of rhetorical display is the teller of the *Tale* whom Mr. Paulson chooses to call "Hack." After demonstrating how the Hack overthrows the "sovereignty of the word" and how he batters and mangles rhetoric, and after noting the divarication of the Puritans and the Anglicans in their attitudes toward literary interpretation, Mr. Paulson points out that "The extent to which the *Tale* has been misread and misunderstood is perhaps indicative of the success enjoyed in the last two hundred and fifty years by Puritan assumptions, including the Ramist definition of rhetoric."

Alignment of *A Tale of a Tub* with Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* and such compendiums of errors as Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena* and Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* indicates Swift's adherence and fidelity to traditional methods of attacking the heretical speech of the Hack. Comparison with Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* demonstrates that the Hack exposes his own stupidity in the same way Folly eulogizes folly, while juxtaposition to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* shows Don Quixote and the Hack "filled with missions they regard as man's highest duty—Quixote's to champion . . . Dulcinea, and the Hack's to champion the moderns." Madness held up to ridicule is not the whole story of *Don Quixote* but it is, says Mr. Paulson, "very largely the whole story about the *Tale of a Tub*."

The initial chapters, "The Parody of Eccentricity" and "The Quixote Theme," are not the real subjects of this book, but they are valuable preludes establishing the intellectual background of the *Tale*. What follows are two long essays in which the general theme is applied to the Gnostic and the Christian views of Man. In exploration of these views Mr. Paulson courageously and stubbornly surveys and charts a course through the very heartland of the *Tale*—the abuses of religion. The Hack's great heresy is his advocacy of the "modern's" principle that Man, independent of the past, can progress without help from the Ancients, or from anyone else. Sufficiency is at the core of the Hack's religion. While trying to create order in the modern way by asserting his sufficiency, the Hack succeeds only in compounding confusion by insisting that he can interpret the "close knots of religion" as it suits him, and can make sense out of the Gnostic jargon, "Basima eacabasa eanaa irraurista, diarba da caeotaba fobor camelanthi," the epigraph on the title page of *A Tale of a Tub* taken from Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*.

The imagination of the Hack, typically Gnostic, is evident in his interpretation of the story of Reynard the Fox and in his vision of Posterity "as a Prince and Time, his tutor, as a baby-killer who is synonymous with death." Such disintegration and destruction of meaning inevitably lead to complete collapse of all understanding of communication, and, as a result, when the Hack strains his "Faculties to their highest Stretch" to "unravel this knotty Point," the best he can produce is a handful of asterisks which he takes "to be a clear Solution of the Matter." Mr. Paulson attributes this irresponsible condition to the influence of Peter Ramus, whose Puritan followers took such extreme license with meaning that every snake became a devil and the New England wilderness the Wilderness of the ancient Hebrews.

The Gnostic movement, as Paulson understands it, separates man from his neighbors and encourages him "to secede from the human race." He points out that the "Gnostic heresy was particularly appropriate for Swift's purpose, because it not only expressed a philosophical, or at least mythical, basis for

sufficiency, but at the same time manifested the wildest examples of what sufficiency can lead to in practice." With this idea in mind, Mr. Paulson demonstrates the intensity of Swift's abhorrence of a totally sufficient world where, for example, Aeolists reinflate themselves only to produce holy belches, and the madman, self-sufficient and completely withdrawn from the rest of the human race, is satisfied to refund his own ordure. What may appear as scatology is in reality disgust.

Having created a *persona* "in which external reality is an image of the mind," Swift places the Hack in "a Lockean world in which external objects are the only reality" and debases him at will. With great skill Mr. Paulson develops the Christian view of Man by considering the visible and invisible churches, the Hack's battle with reality, the network of association, and the norm of the harmonious body.

No careful consideration of *A Tale of a Tub* is ever complete without facing up to the vexing problem of *The Battle of the Books* and *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. Mr. Paulson has dutifully performed his work. Miriam K. Starkman has suggested that *The Battle of the Books* be thought of as a chapter of the *Tale* and has dismissed *The Mechanical Operation* as "an early version of certain parts of *A Tale of a Tub*, or, more likely, as a portion of *An Analytical Discourse upon Zeal*. . . ." On the other hand, Mr. Paulson offers *The Battle of the Books* as a happy ending to the *Tale* with the Ancients' routing of the Moderns, and *The Mechanical Operation* as a coda to "the theme of the false and the true that runs through the *Tale*."

In general this book presents a conscientious, scholarly, penetrating reading of *A Tale of a Tub*. Of special worth are the two chapters dealing with the Gnostic and the Christian views of Man, which take up a difficult subject with conviction and perspicacity. Of detailed interest and value is the elaboration of the ideas of Peter Ramus. Mr. Paulson has used well the work of Father Ong and Bliss Perry, and has developed the hint Martin Price offers in his book, *Swift's Rhetorical Art*, that the Ramist influence "has not yet been adequately assessed." Father Ong's recent report that Ramus' *Quod sit unica doctrinae instituendae methodus*, translated by Eugene John Barber, is now available is welcome news. Mr. Paulson has, to use Trevor-Roper's words, dug "new channels whereby fresh and refreshing matter flows into old courses."

Until now criticism of Smollett's novels has centered about his personality, his character and his biography. The work of Lewis M. Knapp and Louis L. Martz in this area of study has been invaluable, but their criticism seems to reflect difficulty in fathoming Smollett's purpose in his vigorous, satirical, and at times, peevish work. Although the novels entertain, inform and instruct, and readily reveal their method and sources, they still leave the reader with an uneasy feeling that beneath the hurly-burly and tumultuous worlds of Peregrine Pickle, Humphry Clinker, Count Fathom and the rest there must be something more substantial than is apparent. It may be that the failure to locate the real purpose of Smollett's novels (if, indeed, there is one) is one reason why his work occupies a lesser niche in literary history than does that of Richardson, Fielding and Sterne. Anxious to elevate Smollett to a higher place, Mr. Goldberg has attempted the restoration by examining the intellectual forces at work in the novels, by relating Smollett to the Scottish Common-Sense School and finally,

by showing how each novel works out a single aspect of the intellectual and social milieu of that school whose main function has been "an effort, singular until the last decades, in reconciling a dualism inherent in Western thought since the close of the seventeenth century." He singles out from the brilliant array of Scottish thinkers Adam Ferguson, Alexander Carlyle, George Turnbull, Hugh Blair, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid to illustrate their common-sensically conciliatory approach to current opposing ideas in literature, economics, sociology and philosophy. Smollett is then brought into association with the men and ideas of this school. Thereafter, this book is a systematic, uniform study of each of the novels. In one chapter devoted to each novel, Mr. Goldberg extends the discussion of the Scottish School to account for its influence in the novel in question, establishes the dichotomy underlying the novel and then finds support for his ideas in the text, *Roderick Random* thus becomes a study in reason and passion; *Peregrine Pickle*, a study in imagination and judgment; *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, a study in art and nature; *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, a study in social- and self-love; and *Humphry Clinker*, a study in primitivism and progress. Through this neat arrangement Mr. Goldberg desires to lift Smollett's novels to an intellectual level they have never heretofore enjoyed.

Such a prosperous outline of a new approach to the work of Smollett, however, falls far short of the mark and must be considered only as a preliminary probing to discover Smollett's purpose and to align him with his more famous contemporaries. Mr. Goldberg's basic premise has not been firmly established. His excessive use of qualifying phrases reflects an uncertainty about Smollett's association with the Scottish School. For example, this excerpt is typical. The italics are those of this reviewer.

Smollett *appears to have enjoyed some degree* of intimacy with most of the Scottish literary lights. It is *usually assumed* that the Edinburgh letters of July 15 and August 18 in *Humphry Clinker* contain much that is autobiographical, . . .

We *can only conjecture* as to the validity of the autobiographical in *Humphry Clinker*, but we *can state with reasonable assurance* and despite the paucity of actual autobiographical evidence that Smollett was well within this "hot-bed of genius."

Aware of the weakness of his statements, Mr. Goldberg shifts ground by observing that "it is less than relevant to wonder whether Smollett actually read the works of the Scottish group, or whether conversations with them were of an intellectual nature," and adds that "it is sufficient to note that he emerged from the same force erupting in Scotland which produced an Adam Smith, a Hugh Blair, or an Adam Ferguson." But even this divagation fails to convince because many of the Scottish works to which he alludes were published after Smollett's first three novels had appeared. For example, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* came out in 1759; Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism*, in 1762; Dr. Reid's *Inquiry*, in 1764; and Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, in 1783. On the other hand, Smollett's novels appeared in 1748, 1751, 1753, 1760-1 and 1771.

By the severe limitations of his own making, Mr. Goldberg, uncomfortably confined and cramped, is forced to strain the limits of his ingenuity to squeeze

each novel into its narrow frame. In his preface, he seems to belatedly note this difficulty, but it is, of course, too late to remake the text. Two examples out of many may suffice to illustrate the problem.

Ferdinand Count Fathom is considered as a study in art and nature. To bolster the argument that Smollett intended to describe Count Fathom in terms of art, Mr. Goldberg resorts to ferreting out such phrases as "artful politician," "artful traitor," "artful serpent," "artful incendiary" and "artful Fathom." On the same basis a similar case could be built for *Peregrine Pickle* simply by noting that in Volume I, Chapter LXIII, the heading begins with these words: "Peregrine artfully foments a Quarrel. . . ." *Humphry Clinker*, a study in primitivism and the idea of progress, according to Mr. Goldberg, merits special attention because of Smollett's use of sartorism. To this end he considers Dutton's fancy finery and Clinker's ripped breeches symbols, and finds symbolic significance in the semi-nudity of Win Jenkins when she dropped her petticoat and when she had to jump from the burning inn on a moonlight night—"and a fresh breeze of wind blowing, none of Mrs. Winifred's beauties could possibly escape the view of the fortunate Clinker, whose heart was not able to withstand the united force of so many charms." When Mr. Goldberg compares the novel on this score with *King Lear*, *A Tale of a Tub* and *Sartor Resartus*, he is in a lamentably weak position.

Smollett's works may turn out to be much more than picaresque or busconesque novels and yield even more than what Professors Martz and Knapp have already found, but Mr. Goldberg does not have the key in this book. Within the narrow limitations of a single formula, he has written a challenging and interesting book, but neither a conclusive nor a convincing one. Deeper study of the ideas of the members of the Scottish Common-Sense School and accumulation of more factual evidence to associate Smollett with this group are needed before the argument herein presented is acceptable.

S. A. GOLDEN

Wayne State University

The Idea of Poetry in France by Margaret Gilman. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958. Pp. xi + 324. \$6.00.

The Writer's Way in France by Robert Greer Cohn. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960. Pp. 447. \$5.00.

The Idea of Poetry in France, by the late Margaret Gilman, retraces the death and rebirth of French poetry from Malherbe to Baudelaire. Her account bears at once on poetical productions and contemporary criticism during that period. The concept of imagination is the main idea stressed throughout her study.

In the 16th century, imagination was the sacred fire which conferred immortality on the poet. With Ronsard, it went under the name of invention: "the work of an imagination which conceives the idea and forms of all imaginable things." From the middle of the 17th century onward, the strong social pressure, the worldly spirit, brought poetry down from Parnassus to the salons. Its aim became

moral instruction and pleasure. At first controlled by reason, poetry was finally absorbed by it. To Voltaire himself it was nothing else than "the ornament of reason." Strangely enough, much was written on poetry and the lack of real inspiration was often deplored; but the French critics, generally influenced by English sensationalism, considered imagination as decaying sense and associated that faculty with memory. At the most, they conceded that imagination could be "compounded" and bring together various elements retained by memory.

Diderot alone had enough vision to envisage a poetry worthy of that name. Yet, while his theory of memory anticipates that of Bergson and Proust, imagination to him is still the art of rearranging elements found in memory. It is only through his stress on suggestion, the mysterious rapports which he finds embodied in metaphors, his theory of the analogy between images and sentiments, his stress on rhythm, harmony and sound, that Diderot anticipates Poe and Baudelaire. From numerous quotations from the critics of the time, we understand that while imagination holds a greater and greater place in poetical theory, this faculty retains its ties with memory. In the meantime, poetry remains uninspired. In despair, many critics come to think that the real poetic spirit will have to express itself in French prose which, all considered, does not essentially differ from poetry. Chénier praises enthusiasm but does not distinguish it from emotion; only in Joubert does imagination appear as "the aptitude for perceiving things invisible."

It was not criticism that brought about the regeneration of poetry but the influence of the illuminists. This influence is felt in Madame de Staël's conception of a "poetry fraught with emotion, enthusiasm, and imagery, possessed of a mysterious, even mystical, quality," such as she had found in German romanticism.

It took a long time for the romantic revolution to bring that quality to the fore. Three major trends are distinguished in French romanticism: the conception of poetry as a spontaneous overflow of emotion, the revival of poetry as art, and "an increasing sense of poetry as a special and mysterious experience" due in large part to the influence of the illuminist tradition. Those trends appear separately in the romantic poets before fusing in Baudelaire.

With Baudelaire, imagination is at last enthroned. The basis of his poetry is his own experience, which is also that of his "hypocrite lecteur." Only partly does he follow Gautier's notion of Art, Poe's stress on composition. In his own way, he believes in the supreme morality of art but that is because real poetry is always "opposed to facts, always in revolt, always a negation of evil." Margaret Gilman's treatment of Baudelairean aesthetics is, in our opinion, one of the best published so far. She mentions Baudelaire's indebtedness to Poe in so far as the transcendental character of beauty is concerned but she also stresses Baudelaire's particular notion of the double character of beauty: "all forms of beauty, like all possible phenomena, contain an eternal element and a transitory one—an absolute element and a particular one." Absolute beauty does not exist and Baudelaire's is the "multiform and multicolored beauty which moves in the infinite spirals of life." The variable element is found in the world of the poet. This is the source of the poet's "modernity." The transcendental world must fuse in the poet's vision with his own fleeting world. One of the functions of the imagination is the discovery of *correspondences* between the two, whether in

the form of synesthesia or of vertical correspondences. Imagination is no longer with Baudelaire the faculty of forming images of reality; it is the faculty of forming images that go beyond reality. It is the queen of truth, and the *possible* is one of the provinces of the truth.

Margaret Gilman's work supplies a very well documented account of what happened to the idea of poetry in France while poetry itself went underground during the Age of Reason, as well as a detailed history of its rebirth. It also provides along the way an account of the evolution of the concept of imagination, a subject far more neglected until now in French than in English literary history.

In *The Writer's Way in France*, Professor Cohn applies to the history of French literature the Post-Hegelian form of criticism which he had already used in his work on Mallarmé. His dialectical method is grounded on the Kierkegaardian paradox rather than on Hegelian logic. This means that oppositions are considered as taking place in the mind of the writer rather than on a purely historical plane. The fundamental problem for him is therefore that of creativity.

In Part I, the creative temperament is defined as a certain "lag" in the rhythm of human life. This lag is due to the damming up of a daemonic energy, release of which takes the form of artistic expression. The writer reveals new values or festering sores (hence a poetry of light and a poetry of darkness), but whatever human experience he may bring to the light of consciousness, the process is one of negating, because consciousness always involves a certain detachment from its object. By reason of his otherness, the writer has to discover his identity and liberate himself from contemporary society through literary embodiment of myths and archetypes.

In Parts II and III, the method is applied to the evolution of French literature, then to specific authors illustrating various moments of that evolution. "Expression always comes about via the negation of the unexpressed, which, in relation to intellectual man, we call 'nature'." Without going into the process of symbolization itself, Professor Cohn defines the symbolic meaning of the elements: light and air correspond to the male vision of heaven; water to the "eternal in feminine, undulant, caressing presence of the all." The divinization of nature is followed by that of trees, flowers, beasts, the blood cult, the cult of animals. The next phase is that of bondless love for the parent, a love which, once thwarted, gives rise to the adult Persons of religion and to the imaginary beings of fairydom.

Thus, in certain passages of the *Roland*, we already find a combination of "the love of the father (powerful, saintly Charlemagne), the homoerotic (the sentimental combat of Roland and Olivier), and the love of animals, blood and nature. . . ." Marking a step forward, *Tristan*, with its opening hunting scene, is interpreted as the search for the father by the lost, disinherited prince. The opening of *Perceval* mingles the adoration of nature with the yearning for the missing father symbolized by the full-fledged knights whom the young Perceval mistakes for angels. Perceval's quest is that of Stephen Dedalus: "to forge in the smithy of his soul the conscience of his race." The fact that Perceval was brought up by a woman marks the influence of woman which from then on is to dominate French literature. As a literary theme, the sea appears together with

the cult of woman. Woman, for the adolescent mediaeval mind, is both angel and prostitute. The Neo-Platonism of the Renaissance confirms that polarity but the unavoidable reaction soon brings back, with firm and solid institutions, in the works of the Protestant poets and in Catholic poets of the Counter-Reformation, the image of the Hebraic Father.

With Montaigne, the writer's vocation becomes enlightened. The polarity of Montaigne's youthful stoicism and of his scepticism yields to the values of life. In the dualism of Descartes, "the enlightened vocation again strongly hints at its schizophrenic or paranoiac underside. . . ." Yet, gradually, Descartes gravitates toward the empirical and the Social.

As we progress through the literary survey, we note that each period is characterized by a double polarity. In the 18th century, the horizontal axis of "love of mankind" replaces the vertical axis of "love of God." In Rousseau, these are merged as "rigid male doctrine" on one side, and, on the other, a "feminine suppleness in dialectical contortions." With the suffering occasioned by the Revolution, a further dissolution of spiritual barriers is encouraged by a new wave of mysticism. "Vertical synesthesia" meets in Baudelaire with "horizontal synesthesia." This extends the writer's awareness of the cosmos. "The vertical dialectic, a modality of the daemonic rhythm of all creativity, is complemented by a horizontal one between the main branches of culture: between art and society, adding realism . . . and between art and science. . . ." Literature preserves its elementary themes but these are constantly enriched by a dialectical process tending to enlarge human experience.

The studies on French Symbolism, included in Part IV together with detailed analysis of some mediaeval works, aim at revealing this enrichment. Rimbaud appears as "a modern Perceval, deprived, by divorce, of a father and further exposed to the neglect or the stings of an unfeminine, harshly dutiful mother." Rimbaud's is an exemplary creative temperament, at odds with society, in quest of his identity, in quest of his missing father symbolized by the sun. In Proust, the need to rediscover oneself grew more slowly, thanks to a favorable family atmosphere, and the lag which is the source of creativity was more protracted. Yet Proust was also at odds with society and with himself because of his excessive emotional rhythm. His yearning for purity expresses itself through predilection for the ethereal elements, light and air; water is intimately apprehended "in the airy delicate form" of "rain falling gently in the garden." The sea appears to him "typically veiled in his urbane delicacy, glimpsed through the scintillating play of light and impressionistic forms of flowers and girls scattered about the lawned terraces of the summer hotel on the beach. The refinement involves a rich simultaneity, a complexity such as we find building in the deep harmonies and polytonality of Debussy. . . ." Proust's frustrated adoration for his mother is diverted "to the advantage of the pink hawthorne blossoms. . . ." As in Perceval's or Rimbaud's case, the keynote of the father to son relationship is absence; yet the image of the father appears in a stained-glass Gothic window in the form of a solitary figure, described by Proust as "that of a King of cards, who lived up there, . . . between heaven and earth . . .," suggesting the "Sad King" of Rouault.

The very complexity of a method which combines with a wealth of erudition the resources of phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and anthropology makes it

difficult at times to follow the dialectical movement which Professor Cohn wants to bring out. His survey suffers from the difficulties inherent in the use of existential analysis on the historical plane. His interpretations seem somewhat overcharged with Freudian meanings. With him, the sketch of the writer's personality is, in our opinion, more brilliant than the historical development, the treatment of a given work better than that of the writer, the aesthetic analysis of given passages or poems even better. He is at his best when he succeeds in dissociating the various elements which constitute the unique impression produced on us by the writer's art: "the sunniness and clear-patterned, tapestrylike *métier*" of a Rondeau by Charles d'Orléans, the baroque chiaroscuro in Andromaque's description of the sack of Troy, the Monet-like impressionist atmospheres in Proust. In such brief evocations, the critic actually helps us to understand through his own creativity, reinforcing, in true Baudelairean fashion, our aesthetic emotion with intellectual pleasure, without undermining the integrity of the work of art.

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Mark Twain and Huck Finn by Walter Blair. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960. Pp. xi + 436. \$7.50.

Of the four major publications based on the Mark Twain Papers in the Huntington Library: Dixon Wecter, *Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks* (San Marino, 1949), *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* (Boston, 1952); Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959); and Walter Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), Professor Blair's is the most significant. Not only the collection in the Huntington, but that of the Berg in the New York Public Library, and several other university and private manuscript holdings, besides all available printed material, have been laid under contribution for this work. It is safe to say that no important manuscript or printed item has escaped Professor Blair's keen eye. Passages from the notebooks are judiciously chosen, allowing the reader to watch Twain's mind in the process of creation: for example, "Put in thing from Boy-lecture"; "You go and tell Mr. Smith that I wouldn't come down to see the Twelve Apostles"; "I never had such a fight over a book in my life before." Some of the colorful Twain language has rubbed off on the usually crisp and straightforward style of this critic: "Remembering the way a steamboat tore into a raft now and then . . . he had one come looming out of the gray thick night in his novel"; and "In further imagining the way Mark would blister with a blast anyone who engaged in such sentimentering, I managed to refrain."

The book's title does not give a fair idea of its broad expanse. It provides abundant biographical detail (for the most part relevant) concerning Twain's mature life—before, during, and after writing *Huck*. The outlines of the warm, human, sometimes irascible personality which emerged from Edward Wagenknecht's *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* (New Haven, 1935) are not

materially altered, but they are deepened and extended, particularly in respect to the long continued and mutually productive friendship with William Dean Howells. There is a parallel, both in sensitiveness and range, between Blair's pen portrait and Hal Holbrook's dramatic representation of Mark Twain.

This book includes criticism of all Twain's major works, as well as of numerous short stories and essays. We are not disappointed in our expectation of what this pioneer in the study of American humor would do in dredging the reservoir of Twain's anecdotes. Among the many debts which Twain owes to such writers of humor and local color as Shillaber, Longstreet, and Harris, the cooperation with William Wright [Dan De Quille] is a new, fascinating story. On the trail of the English and European borrowings, first blazed by Minnie Brashear in 1934 and marked with additional signposts by a dozen scholars since, Professor Blair has pointed out the influence of Carlyle, Charles Reade, and Poe. His study of Twain's notations in Horace W. Fuller's *Impostors and Adventurers* (1882) is impressive, but should doubtless be supplemented by the earlier articles on Eleazer Williams, claimant for "the Lost Dauphin," in *Putnam's Magazine* (1853-54), which Twain and many other mid-Western readers certainly saw when they came out. The most interesting part of "The Literary Flux" is the interpretation of the impact on Twain of Lecky's *History of European Morals*, first indicated by Chester Davis in *The Twainian* (1956). In discussing earlier and contemporary influences, Professor Blair exemplifies the sage advice of John L. Lowes: that the critic should show not only where a writer got his material, but also what he did with it.

On the moot point of censorship by Livy Clemens and William Dean Howells, the author follows Wagenknecht's lead in the view that Clemens himself knew he needed "civilizing," and he supports this by additional evidence. One of the rare instances in which Professor Blair is taken in by Clemens' occasional lapses from good taste is his admiration for "the handsomest mansion in Hartford," which, Blair says, "shone brilliantly even among the splendid dwellings of the opulent city." It does not seem likely that the Hartford eye, accustomed to the classic design of Bulfinch's State House, and the Wadsworth and Sigourney mansions (only three outstanding examples), would consider Clemens' home anything but a Gothic monstrosity. In fact, there may well be satire in the *Hartford Times'* description of the house, with its elaborate statement of measurements and enumeration of rooms; and doubtless the house was reproduced in *Harper's Magazine* because of its author's fame rather than its own elegance. However smug about it, Clemens described the structure aptly as "one of the gaudiest effects I ever instigated." This desire for promotion is nevertheless brilliantly demonstrated in Chapter 25, "Publication," which shows how ingeniously Clemens could push his own work; twentieth-century Madison Avenue might well study this account.

The concluding chapter, "Hucka, Khöck, Hunckle, Gekkelberri," shows definitively how extensive has been the circulation of *Huck Finn* in both Americas, Europe, and the Orient. However significant these statistics on publication, it seems to this reviewer that the last chapter of a book so rich in new material and in critical insight should present an evaluation of *Huck Finn* as an artistic unit. In view of the number of critical articles on the subject of the book's overall structure (those by Richard P. Adams, Leo Marx, and William Van O'Connor

represent only a segment of this criticism, all of which is cited in the Notes and Bibliography), one might well look to Professor Blair's book for a conclusive statement on this much discussed and important point. Professor Blair has, however, provided all the information needed for such an analysis. To scholars of American literature, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn* is indispensable; and it will also provide enjoyment for the average reader.

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Myth and Mythmaking, ed. Henry A. Murray. New York: George Braziller, 1960. Pp. 381. \$6.00.

Recent criticism evinces an absorption in mythology which rivals earlier vogues in source-tracing and symbol-chasing. But while some commentators approximate those curious exegeses that propounded parallels between, say, Huck Finn and Dante, the change in critical focus has been for the most part healthful. Professor Murray's collection of fine essays, several of which were garnered from *Daedalus*, serves as ample testimony.

In "Some Meanings of Myth" Harry Levin discusses the semantic confusion that shrouds the subject. The word has been used so broadly as to lose its strict historical relevance. Perhaps "modern myth" is indeed a contradiction in terms, although Henry Hatfield cogently analyzes "The Myth of Nazism" while Andrew Lytle writes informatively of "The Working Novelist and the Myth-making Process." Today myths are as seemingly omnipresent as symbols were not long ago. Thus Herbert Weisinger makes "An Examination of Myth and Ritual Approach to Shakespeare," and although his essay is provocative, one shudders at the thought of professional journals bulging with studies of the "myth" in Balzac and Dickens or perhaps Dumas and Scott. The dangers are apparent. Levin has them in mind when he insists on critics clarifying their terms and even stating their assumptions before proceeding on the perilous journey through mythology. The mythological method, if such it may be called, turns upon two questions which Levin posits but does not resolve: first, whether the ontogeny of the dream really recapitulates the phylogeny of myth; second, whether the poet can manufacture his own "personal" mythology. Perhaps these questions are ultimately unanswerable, but hypothetical resolutions are necessary for any meaningful discussion of the mythological element in literature.

Yet mythology, strictly speaking, is more the province of the anthropologist and the sociologist than of the man of letters, and to some extent they seem to resent literary intrusion into their domain. Their reaction is understandable although partisan. In "Recurrent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking" Clyde Kluckhohn argues that, while common motifs characterize various cultures, it is dangerous to over-simplify. Phyllis Ackerman documents such an error in "Stars and Stories"—that of Alfred Jeremias, a German orientalist, whose obsession with the solar zodiac as the masterkey was legendary. Richard M. Dorson is even more explicit and acid in "Theories of Myth and the Folklorist." He tears

into psychoanalytical theories and attacks Campbell's universal monomyth. Dorson typifies the criticism of the professional folklorist.

Nevertheless Joseph Campbell's "The Historical Development of Mythology" emerges as the outstanding essay in the entire collection. Despite occasional errors which anthropologists and folklorists hasten to point out, Campbell displays an immense erudition on their own terms. He is capable of minute analysis in anthropological matters, though committing himself to a Jungian belief in archetypes. Most importantly, at least to my mind, he is a synthesist, a system-builder: he sees all mythology, despite time or clime, as a variation of the universal monomyth of the hero who overcomes obstacles to achieve his goal. This may be an extreme position (expounded at length in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and his in-progress *Masks of God*), of course, and has certainly provoked frontal assault. Campbell is bound to make errors, like Spengler, Toynbee, Hegel, or any other system-builder, for it is impossible not to err with some particulars in such a gigantic super-structure. But Campbell, as in this essay, has two qualities which folklorists generally lack: first, he remains by conviction a synthesist who incorporates the part, analysis, into the whole, synthesis, while most of his colleagues content themselves with statistics and frequency-counts of myth. Second, he has a grand poetic vision and his style, like Frazer's in *The Golden Bough*, is itself a monumental contribution. It is a Campbell, not a dispassionate folklorist, who ultimately captures not only the layman's but also the specialist's imagination. This fact, while not all-important, is still significant.

In his own conclusion to the anthology, "The Possible Nature of a 'Mythology' to Come," Professor Murray is eclectic, though with effort, and attempts to utilize the various approaches to mythology. He favors the broad interpretation of mythology and tends rather more towards Campbell than towards Dorson. His psychoanalytical orientation is evident but not intrusive. Subtle, sophisticated, rigorously logical, the essay reads like a chapter from a positivist's handbook.

Thus *Myth and Mythmaking* is an invaluable compilation for both novice and student. In no other book is the subject of myth and its relationship to literature so ably presented; nowhere else, in such a limited space, are the antipodal positions so clearly defined. The bibliographical footnotes are extensive and seductive. Hence the book superbly achieves its goal by irresistibly tempting the reader to other, more exhaustive and specialized works in this fascinating field.

GEORGE ROSS RIDGE

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The Style of Don Juan by George M. Ridenour. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960. Pp. xiv + 168. \$4.00.

Professor Ernest J. Lovell, one of the best contemporary critics of Byron, has observed that "prevailing taste and present critical theory are often inimical to and inadequately prepared to deal with the long poem of conversational tone."

Lovell's own essay, "Irony and Image in *Don Juan*,"* is an important step toward providing us a critical stance from which to view, particularly, *Don Juan* as a unified, carefully wrought work (the superb *Variorum Don Juan*, of course, proves beyond doubt—if indeed it still needs proving—that a conscious artist was at work here). George M. Ridenour's *The Style of Don Juan* takes us even further in this same direction—for it provides not only the "stance" but the variety of critical perceptions with which to inform that stance.

Ridenour sets out to show that "in spite of its insistent casualness" *Don Juan* "makes its point with . . . single-minded perseverance"—and that point is the revelation of a "central paradox" underlying Byron's universe. To Byron the elements of this universe, Ridenour says, "are in their different ways both means of grace and occasions of sin," and art itself is both a consequence of the Fall, a part of the taint of original sin, and an embodiment of high human values, civilization's way of contending with and rising above a fallen nature. Whether or not one agrees with the particulars of this (and I confess that I am at best only moderately persuaded), one must recognize, I think, the fundamental value of Ridenour's method. It proceeds from the isolation of two organizing themes (the Christian myth of the Fall and the classical rhetorical theory of styles) and an analysis of the persona, the speaker of the poem. If the former is somewhat startling, the latter certainly is not. But Ridenour does considerably more than characterize the persona. He sees him in constant and complex relation to the protagonist of the poem, so that the entire narrative becomes a tension-filled, richly paradoxical "developing dramatic action" (from what Ridenour calls "innocence" to "experience"), rather than a series of more-or-less loosely connected episodes, digressions, lyrics, descriptions, some brilliant, some not.

In this way the striking wholeness of *Don Juan* evolves, an elaborately coherent vision of a poet of considerable imaginative integrity, a synthesis impossible of achievement in isolated studies of the character of *Don Juan*, of the epic details, of the targets of the satire, of the imagery, or even of the various "themes."

Yet the book is not large; it does not attempt to fill out the vision. Its value, and it is a substantial value indeed, lies in its richly complex point of view toward "style," which enables us to see Byron's style not only as a reflection of, but also as a fittingly rhetor-poetical embodiment of, his *Weltanschauung*. As I say, one does not have to agree with Ridenour's particular interpretation; and each reader will sense the strains which result from trying to accommodate certain details of *Don Juan* to Byron's "stance." Yet, if we are ever to read Byron fully, we need to realize that along with the other great Romantics, and despite his hatred of "systems," he knew he had to create a system or "be enslav'd by another man's" (as Blake so aptly put it). And to perceive the style of the system, to see *Don Juan* (and a number of other poems, indeed) aright, Ridenour has taught us that we must erect a critical and exegetical "structure" (or establish a "system of relationships") that will "correspond in a . . . conceptual way to Byron's imaginative construction."

ROBERT F. GLECKNER

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* *The Major Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Reappraisal*, ed. Clarence D. Thorpe, Carlos Baker, and Bennett Weaver (Carbondale, 1957), pp. 228-246.

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